"Where there is no vision the people perish"

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THE POET AND TRANSIENCE

And all our chants but chaplet some decay,
As mine this vanishing—nay, vanished Day.

THESE lines, taken from Francis Thompson's "Ode to the Setting Sun," express a theme that runs through much of the greatest of English poetry. Indeed, they reflect a mood that is a constant background to the lives and the accomplishments of all whose sensibilities are acute. It is the mood of ultimate pessimism and melancholy. It is the mood that perceives in the height of triumph that maturity is but a stage in a hurrying journey towards eventual death and decay.

The life of a man is very short. His powers have scarcely reached their full ripeness and begun to yield their harvest of service to his fellow men, than his body shews the first signs of physical failure. Every time he mobilises his perfected gifts he draws a little more from his wasting store of energy. In planning his life, he is at best only planning a rearguard action against death.

It is natural that this mood should react powerfully on the poet, for the temperament that is most stirred by the brilliance of life at its crest is the most troubled that it should be so transient.

Swinburne has stated the problem of man's destiny :

His speech is a burning fire ;
With his lips he travaileth ;
In his heart is a blind desire,
In his eyes foreknowledge of death ;
He weaves, and is clothed with derision :
Sows, and he shall not reap ;
His life is a watch or a vision
Between a sleep and a sleep.

To Gray, as to many of us, the solemnity of the mood is never gathered as intensely as round a village church. The famous Elegy is saturated with the transience of a human existence in which "the paths of glory lead but to the grave."

In A. E. Housman we have another poet oppressed by the same mood :

Oh tarnish late on Wenlock Edge,
Gold that I never see ;
Lie long, high snowdrifts in the hedge
That will not shower on me.

This foreboding of the shortness of our time is, of course, not always with us. Sometimes this is because the mood is overlaid with many activities. We are determined that sadness shall not come to the consciousness, and with both hands we struggle to keep it out. We find exhilarating the bustle of packing and preparing for the Caravan's start for the Dawn of Nothing.

Modern psychology has taught us that we do grave injury to our personalities by this process of repressing unwelcome thoughts from our minds, and before we begin to trace the poet's way out of these so painful thoughts, we do well to probe the manner in which the mood affects the sensitive and poetic mind.

Who has not lived through a day in which this background of life's transience obtrudes at each turn ? Perhaps we are on holiday and the day is brilliant. The beach is crowded with people chattering in the gayest of moods. It seems good to be alive. But, in the near-by hospital, illness and overshadowing death mock the brightness of sun and scene.

Later we walk along the cliffs. How grand is their steep fall to the sea. We climb them as we climbed them years ago, as a child. Yes, but is it the same ? The speed of our climb has suffered badly since thirty years ago, and yet how quickly

those years have gone. What changes in our still vital self will the next thirty years bring ?

The children pick wild flowers, a beautiful bunch of summer colour. Yes, but before we are home the flowers have died in the little hot hands.

The children are in bed in that close of the day which has always intensified the mood of which I write. But the little children, asleep at last—they at least are young and their life on a crescendo ? Yes, they are young and, for many years, hope and ambition should be powerful impulses in their young veins. But in a space of years that, to the universe, is momentary, they will have passed as completely as their bunch of flowers.

So in the most ordinary walks of life, transience is all around us. Possessed of mortal bodies, we move in a kaleidoscope world. The flowers upon our table are as mortal as the bread we eat and the clothes we wear.

> As for man, his days are as grass : as
> a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.
> For the wind passeth over it, and it is
> gone ; and the place thereof shall
> know it no more.

The scene in which we live can be so perfect, and the genius of man can bring it to so admirable a degree of excellence. But how we must hurry to savour it before it recedes. It is as though we spend half our lives collecting, grain by grain, some very precious store, knowing that we must spend the latter half pouring it out on to waste ground. It is not strange that, in gathering our store, we feel in ourselves a sense of futility and sadness.

Interest in the opposite sex is perhaps the most exhilarating of the expressions of maturity. To the mature man, the company of a woman is a stimulus and a ferment, giving to every experience of life a bouquet which is the essence of maturity. His moments of accomplishment and triumph gain colour from the presence of the onlooking eyes of a woman. And the beauty of life is never so piquantly devised as in the womankind that crowd the scene. Hair and dress set off that essential womanhood that fills his imagination. It is she who gives his teeming canvas its brightness. It is she who, when he has built his remarkable house of life, irradiates it again and again.

So it is that the subtle difference of sex provides the crown of all that is colourful in life and of all that we associate with maturity. But the eye of the beholder fades as quickly as the eye of the admired. This particular perfection must also die in a world in which :

> Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
> Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

We should not be accused of morbidity in having these feelings. Nor, in fact, does the sense of transience affect mainly those of aloof personality or those whose life has been unhappy. The mood comes on the brightest of days, when every fruit we have so much craved for is at last glowing ripe and brilliant on the tree. It comes then to remind us that, having now reached the crest, the downward path must begin. So, as helpless spectators, we see the processes of decay at work until :

> The clouds that gather round the setting sun
> Do take a sober colouring from an eye
> That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality.

Must not war give a new emphasis to this mood ? And must we not feel that, if this mood were conquered, and this ultimate sadness dispelled, life would regain

its upward glance ? So far, we have done no more than remind ourselves of a problem. So far, we have only felt anew the heavy load that is laid on human vigour and ambition by the transience of their accomplishment.

But I have described this mood in the belief that it is given to the poet to be one of the main path-finders in the quest for its resolution. We must trace, if we can, the manner of its so doing. Francis Thompson has perhaps done more than any other poet to remind us that all is not transient, and I shall quote from him several times.

The poet begins his task of dispelling this dark cloud of pessimism by dwelling on the altruistic. Thus Wordsworth has written :

> We men, who in our morn of youth defied
> The elements, must vanish ; be it so !
> Enough, if something from our hands have power
> To live, and act, and serve the future hour.

In these lines the poet has expressed the desire that first stirs in our adolescence to serve and to be spent to the uttermost for the sake of others. There must be few who have not felt the release from fear and frustration which comes from service to their neighbour.

But Wordsworth's lines lead the poet on to further thoughts. To "serve the *future* hour." Here is the idea of immortality of endeavour. In the outpouring of human energies, the poet sees a pebble cast into the water, which causes ever-widening and never-ceasing circles. Francis Thompson takes up this thought :

> All things by immortal power,
> Near or far,
> Hiddenly
> To each other linkèd are,
> That thou canst not stir a flower
> Without troubling of a star.

So the poet reminds us that our activity will slightly divert the course of humanity, which will never be quite the same as if we had not been. We are a transient part of a deathless whole. In that thought the poet finds that eternity in a world of change for which our nature craves. So Thompson writes of his own poetic work :

> So through his river mine shall reach thy sea,
> Bearing its confluent part ;
> In his pulse mine shall thrill ;
> And the quick heart shall quicken from the heart that's still.

But poetry does not stop here. It now reaches forward into spheres beyond the material. This journal is not the place to deal with any particular forms or dogmas of religion, although most religions, and certainly Christianity, owe a great deal to religious poetry.

There is, however, a foundation of feeling common to those of all religions and, I think, to those of no religion. Cardinal Newman described this possession as the Illative Sense, by which the spirit of man reaches forward to something greater than it can think about. Some would describe it as an inborn sense of reverence. Newman's own poem, "Lead, kindly light," is an example of poetry, feeling its way by means of such a sense.

How is this feeling aroused and fed ? Artists, whether poets, musicians, or painters, have been amongst its principal servants. Milton knew this when he wrote, in "Il Penseroso" :

> But let my due feet never fail
> To walk the studious cloister's pale,

And love the high-embowèd roof,
With antique pillars massy-proof,
And storied windows richly dight
Casting a dim religious light :
There let the pealing organ blow
To the full-voiced quire below
In service high and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all Heaven before mine eyes.

Is not the poet here describing a state of reverent feeling, in no sense dependent upon any particular beliefs, in which the hearer seems to *sense* that all is well, and in which the melancholy of transience shrinks in importance. Francis Thompson, in his well-known lines, has again expressed the feeling :

O World Invisible, we view thee,
O World intangible, we touch thee,
O World unknowable, we know thee,
Inapprehensible, we clutch thee !

So must Milton (and many poets of all religions and ages) have felt that, at such times, the partial is in the presence of the complete. Transience glimpses the eternal and sadness seems trivial. Somehow they are comforted.

In the earlier part of this article I described the mood of depression in which we are gripped when we feel most sadly the passing of the years. In such a mood our thoughts go back to our distant childhood, now so dead and gone. Many things flit through our memory. Our first childhood experiences of new things, seen with incredulous eyes. Much-loved pictures in almost forgotten books ; the voice of a mother long dead, and the terrifying dark of our childhood bedroom. We now sit with this strange mixture of memories, as incongruous as Alice with the Mad Hatter, and the dear White Rabbit, as our memory throws up inconsequently things that flit poignantly through the mind. These things, which were once so vitally young, have already become fantastic memories. Will the memories also soon be dead ?

It is here that the poet's thoughts move on to whatever in his life has deeply stirred him in mystic and religious experience. Even now, perhaps, in his village church the sunset is on the deeply-stained windows and the oil lamps are lit. He hears old familiar music and words that are strongly rooted in his past and the past of his country. The black mood thus finds its own specific solvent and vanishes. In words of poetry he seeks to convey this depth of feeling to his fellow men, oppressed by their own thoughts. The poet of another religion seeks by his own path to find the same end.

Here, then, is perhaps the greatest service that poetry can yield. Here it can act as the medium between man as the eager and vital pilot of his own life, and man as the lonely child in a vast and mystical universe. It can integrate these two, so that we see life whole.

In that integration we can fit our own small lives and fears, and find that a life, which has given us the exhilaration of the storm, has also its immovable harbours.

WILLIAM WOLFF.

POETRY IN JASSY

WHEN I arrived at Jassy station I was charmed to find that, among those who had come to meet me, were three poets, lyrical, epic and philosophic respectively, who had come not in order to recite their own productions, but to represent Jassy's main industry. You may remember that Roumania's second town has always been much more literary than Bucharest, and the authorities had desired to turn it into the intellectual centre of the country. My host, Dr. Popa, with two other citizens, were the joint editors of a monthly review devoted to science and art. It would have been hard to find another provincial town with a review of such outstanding quality. The doctor was good enough to ask me for an article, which, to my shame, I have not yet sent him.

I was to meet some of his collaborators, among them Mihai Codreanu, a white-haired gentleman of courtly appearance, who was called the king of all the Jassy poets, and he would assuredly have looked superb upon a throne. He refused, for the moment, to talk about himself, except to say that he was a romantic and therefore a sufferer. "He who has not tasted sugar," he said, "will have no bitterness." He took a gold pencil from his pocket and wrote me down one of the poems of George Lesnea, explaining that Lesnea was a humble Bessarabian and that his poems were influenced both by the spirit of Russia, which is to the east of Bessarabia, and by that of Moldavia, to the west. The poem he was giving me was more Moldavian. Here it is; by the way, Lesnea was in his youth a printer's apprentice and it was probably written during that period. This is the best translation I could manage:

Across the forest lake
    No tiny ripples creep.
How can it ever wake
    Out of the realm of sleep?
The silence of a cloud may be
    More eloquent than nightingales
And there are silences that we
    Would fly from, but no flight avails.

Then suddenly the spell is laid
    And all the world appears to sing . . .
In a tremendous cannonade
    The reeds are quivering.
The willows tremble, swiftly they
    The resolution make
To let their branches kiss the grey,
    Lone waters of the lake.

A silver carpet then
    Across the scene is placed—
A group of little men
    Emerge in sombre haste.
One carries a large net,
    Another brings a spoon
And then all night they set
    Themselves to catch the moon.

Another poet whom I came across was Topirceanu, a Wallachian, who preferred the gentleness, the deeper emotion of Moldavia, so that he settled down in Jassy. Here is one of his poems:

O love, my love, you passed away
And now in solitude I stay . . .
The garden of our happiness
Lies in a tattered, snowy dress.

The boughs are barren, they complain
With every wind that all is vain,
And so with hesitating feet
I come to your deserted seat.

But now my heart says life is long,
As it trembles into song—
Now falls a gaily-coloured snow,
The leaves that lived a year ago.

And what of Otilia Cazimir, who was the intellectual comrade of Topirceanu? Here is one of her productions:

From a gloxinia balcony
Behold a beetle climbing down,
Arrayed in steel-blue garb, for he
Knows how you have to dress in town.

Then smaller, roseate ones awake
And closely watch him in his tracks,
Although they don't require to take
The spectacles from off their backs.

Beneath a flower of cotton-wool,
Made golden when the sun appeared
A beetle strides and he is full
Of dignity and with a beard.

He knows what others merely guess,
By him all wisdom has been hived,
Which he makes clear in his address:
"Good sirs, the spring has just arrived."

Talking of Jassy writers, one should not forget Dimitrie Cantemir, Prince of Moldavia, who was born in 1673 and died in 1723. What a life he had! An encyclopaedist, a member of the French Academy and a voluminous author, he was compelled by enemies to abandon his throne and flee to Russia. The Turks were after him, but the kindly Empress Catherine concealed him under her super-crinoline, for he was very small of stature. This was seen when Peter the Great came to Jassy and wished to do honour to Dimitrie, who had kissed the Tsar's hand on the staircase coming from the Turkish bath. Peter wanted to kiss the little man's face and in order to do so had to lift him in his arms. HENRY BAERLEIN.

Last year I became acquainted with the good work The Poetry Society is doing, through a member of your Council. It was a casual contact, the result of some lunch amenity. My one regret is that I did not know earlier of the Society and its work. I soon became a "fellow." I look forward eagerly to the REVIEW, with its cultured analysis and constructive criticisms. I wish the Society an ever-increasing success in its work. The more the love of beauty can be awakened in human hearts the sooner the world will be freed from the horrors and torments now being experienced. GEO. F. TAYLOR, E.4.

WATCHING A BUZZARD

FOR what Geometry does he define
With tawny wing-tips spread
To catch the buoyant wind above the hill,
Length of his level line ?
For what there turning on his point of wing
Does he describe a circle that I see still
Drawn on the concave sky, till I am led
By his far mewing cry
To seek him where he piles ring upon ring
In measured spirals ? And now he has flown
Beyond my sight, but leaves upon my eye
Suggestions of strange thought that he can never have known.

And often I have seen him tranquilly
Draw out a tangent to the curving sea
Where on thrift-spongy turf
Of Skokholm or of Skomer silently
I lay, and peered down over the abrupt edge
And watched him pass the guillemots' grey ledge,
And watched his brown back cross the bubbling surf,
And saw him turn his head upward to look at me.

But to him what was I ? Not number or name
In a long catalogue ; not to be found
By spine or teats or shape of teeth and skull,
By upright carriage, pigment of skin, by speech
Or class or family—all the things that teach
Man of the generations of his claim.
What was I ? Patch of colour on the ground,
Shape, association (in a brain so dull)
With sudden startling fear upon the nerves.
And so, seeing me as he moves away
He tilts his body to the draught and swerves,
But for a moment only, seeing how still I lay.

And now again I watch him where he soars
Drawing ideal patterns in the air.
Unconscious Platonist ! toward what light
Now do you bear me ? What bright sunshine pours
Over your feathers there ?
What vision have you known, or what delight ?
Unindividual bird, and unaware
Even of identity, of grace, or power ;
Concerned only to fly, not knowing how,
In search of food, to mate, not knowing why ;
Sunk in black, joyless ignorance even now
For all your beauty, while with joy may I
Watch where you circle above me hour after drowsy hour.

What knowledge for me rides upon your wings ?
You are no allegoric strength nor pride
Nor patience. But you draw these diagrams

On which I ponder till ideal things
Become perceptible, and knowledge springs
In visible patterns up into my mind.
Over the sunlit earth then forth I stride ;
I hear the wind passing my ear ; I see
Your motionless wings above me as I go.
My knowledge is such that eyes are not made blind,
Nor ears deaf, nor touch dead. How should it be
That senses were but shams
Or intellect scorning these still have the power to know ?

You shall be symbol of a poet's brain
That has no self to which all reference tends,
But still delights,
Bewildered, in the change of days and nights
And in the alternation of joy and pain.
His knowledge is of Now, nor deals with ends
Nor with beginnings. He has broken time
And holds the shattered minutes in his hands :
He has whittled space away to where he stands.
Yet he can reach
New knowledge, and bind its sections in his rhyme,
There, where the slow waves make their steady gain
Like lace-cuffed infantry scaling the beach,
Or where a soaring buzzard pencils his windy line.

Prisoner of War, Germany. JOHN BUXTON.

GUILTY OF WAR

ARE you afraid that you tremble and turn,
Catching your breath in the safety of words ?
Here, where no birds
Will sing again, Night drops a heavy black,
Obliterating even gloom.
A faint receding whisper is your world,
Tinged with fragrance ended.
You would have had companions on your way
Those you had befriended,
Had it been for anything but gain.
Now you must go
Into the frightening acres of the dark,
A sightless snail,
Leaving behind a smeary tarnished trail,
Still groping forward with unarmoured back,
As heavy-fingered shadows probe your Soul.
If you can face alone
A million eyes of concentrated pain
You are removed from Hate, beyond all harm,
Inhuman as the gross machine of War.

Gibraltar. GUY H. KIRKUS.

JOHN REDWOOD ANDERSON

THE attitude of the average Englishman to poetry can be summed up in Audrey's question of Touchstone in "As You Like It": "I do not know what 'poetical' is: is it honest?" Like Audrey, the English are suspicious of poetry, and Touchstone's answer is by no means assuring: "No, truly, for the truest poetry is the most feigning . . ."

In so far as modern poets are concerned, they have themselves very largely to thank for the reluctance of the public to invite them to their hearthstones. In this age of statistics, machines, psycho-analysis, and uncontrolled science, even the fine arts have not escaped these equalisers, and an alarmingly high percentage of what is written under the denomination of poetry to-day seems to be ground out under any or all of the following stimuli: a supra-Freudian dexterity in trapping the impulses of the subconscious in its more beastly aspects; the premise that imagination is nothing but a provincial venerealee; a setting up of the intellect and reason as the dominant gods; a giant nostalgia for the Smith Major whirligig of the seven deadly sins; and a sentimentality, masked under a façade of brutality, bespeaking the arid mind.

Beauty, goodness, simplicity, form and imagination have all gone overboard and the result is neither poetry nor even metrical exercises.

It is therefore with the same shock of delight that would accompany a vision of the fabulous turrets and spires of Hy Brasil shining out of the western sea, that the poetry-lover comes upon the work of John Redwood Anderson. His poetry enshrines romance, vision, beauty and god-like imagination; he surprises, as Keats would say, "by a fine excess and not by singularity."

In his lovely and fearless bidding for his art as the bridge between mortal event and its repercussion in *other* dimensions, Redwood Anderson occupies a unique position in modern poetry. His calm, tenderly-searching, and highly-disciplined Logos is a still, burning flame ready to touch to life the waiting fire locked away in all human hearts. The variety of his metre adapted to theme, his power of allusion, his imperishable feelings and implicit wisdom put Redwood Anderson among those poets whom Coleridge calls "the true protoplasts—Gods of Love who tame the chaos."

What is poetry?

Carl Sandburg, the American poet, has made ten definitions of poetry, each of which would seem to require a definition of itself, for there is something rather too naively will-o'-the-wisp in such statements as "Poetry is a theorem of a yellow-silk handkerchief knotted with riddles, sealed in a balloon tied to the tail of a kite flying in a white wind against a blue sky in spring"; and "Poetry is the synthesis of hyacinths and biscuits."

It is when we turn to the greatest of all American poets that we get nearer to what is expected of poetry. Edgar Allan Poe maintained that poetry should give the soul an elevating excitement. This at once appeals to Englishmen who, though they would think it the height of bad taste to say so, have always been attracted by the idea of the *soul*. The English are an adventurous race and there is something very appealing in the unknown quantity; so they lean their ears to listen when Poe declares poetry to be an excitement of the soul, then thumb the *Golden Treasury* to discover how many bards conform to this definition. And they find that very few poets stimulate the soul with *every* poem they write.

Even Wordsworth hasn't got the gift consistently, nor Milton, nor Matthew Arnold. Wordsworth interrupts his spell tiresomely to moralise; Milton sends us flying off the mountain into a slough of platitude; and Matthew Arnold catches us by the hair in order to proselytise and dictate. The poets who *always* excite by this soul elation are few and would include Poe himself, Keats, Emily Brontë, Tennyson,

Coleridge, John Clare, Francis Thompson, and in modern times, Walter de la Mare and Redwood Anderson.

The power of a poem to elevate is governed, of course, by its length. Redwood Anderson's subtlety in understanding when the light and the spell are accomplished and the close of his poem has come, is a rare achievement. He understands to perfection when, as Poe would say, the stamp has been pressed down sufficiently upon the wax.

Deeply conscious as Anderson is of man's immemorial response to beauty, he achieves his consistent poetic excitement by impelling us to an appreciation not so much of visible beauty, as of the tantalising beauty which is beyond us; he unfolds vistas of the beauty that is out of reach and he elates with the sense he gives of the grandeur of immortality.

There is sorrow in Anderson's poetry, too, that grief at the human powerlessness to comprehend in the earthly time-span the mystery of the ecstasy of the beyond-life, of which Anderson gives us glimpses in the amaranth gleams of his "Icarus."

This poet has never lost the remarkable gift of making of everything, even the most familiar things, a *first occasion*. Like Newman, he implies that in a stone, or a sunbeam, or in a humble weed is hidden, through the "economy of the visible world," some entity, some agent of God or perfection, whose actual raiment this flower or this light is; the ἰδέαι, crystallised in matter, offer a compelling liberation, and so we may have an actual existence in eternity while still going about our occasions in this dimension. Anderson endows every object, physical or metaphysical of which he writes, with light, beauty and sublime worth—a poet, indeed, who writes not for the dictates of reason and not for the gratification of the emotions, but writes for the soul, wherein lies the highest, the purest, the most poetic and ardent joy. The answer of the world to those who cater for the soul is—Calvary; but this essay is not addressed to those of the world but to those of the earth.

Walls and Hedges is a collection of Anderson's early poems, but already the vision of the Secret Rose is clearly seen, not abstract or remote, not in acknowledged beauty, but in humble, discarded things, as in his "Paper Flowers"; already in "Evening Light" he demonstrates the striking force of a unique imagination clothed in simplicity; already he gives the extraction of an atavistic joy from old, earthy things in "Ecstasy"; and in "Blenheim Court" shows his awareness of those hints of a mystical Eden which abide even at the heart of dereliction and direst poverty. In this volume, too, we find his rare sensitivity, his reverence and pity for inarticulate things, for little transient things whose only prospect is destruction and death.

His sense of the eternal surprise and wonder in common things is most searchingly conveyed in a poem in this book about a field on the verge of the town, where:

> Like a brave smile in a long life's despair
> The lowly daisy blossoms there;
> And, like a song spoken
> From a heart broken,
> The yellow buttercup
> Its soul of summer hours lifts up.
> The stunted poplar-stump puts forth its leaf
> Obedient to the saddened spring,
> The linnets and the robins sing
> Their songs of joy, their songs of grief;
> Or, on the evening hush,
> Breaks out the golden triumph of the thrush.

And here shining and beautiful,
And like a childhood memory,
—A thing which olden tears
Keep sacred from the years—
Shining among the sodden mud and grass,
A pool
Reflects the silence of the sky
And all the clouds that pass.

These poems in *Walls and Hedges,* in which the obstinate conflict of the country and town is shown in all the fierce beauty and pride of both sides, prepare the way for the volume entitled *Haunted Islands*—poems poured out in some strange innocency, as though the poet were an estrayent from the world that was, and speaks from a living memory of the rocks and moors and hills of a primitive life unsullied by civilisation. In this work, Anderson gives a strange, elating and an elevating hint of Creation's τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι—what it was to be—God's intent, the tender ideal, as against the use men have made of it.

And in *Haunted Islands* Anderson restores the dignity of the simplest acts of life, the poetic nobility of clods of earth, of sea-sand, of swathes of cut hay, of old brown hands kneading bread, and he compels us to assent that under the most unpromising exterior may lie a delicate rapport with the mystical beyond. Above all, in *Haunted Islands,* the poet reveals the stark spirit of man, alone, very threatened, very handicapped, but wresting out of fear and despair the courage to survive :

Earth gave man nothing but her naked bones—
Earth gave man nothing but a heap of stones :
"Build here your dwelling, if you can,
And dwell here, if you dare !"

Haunted Islands is the epitome of that challenge.

In the next volume, *The Vortex,* the struggle shifts to the subtle battleground of modern civilisation. The poet's work has strengthened, the vision is secured. Now the soul of a great city is revealed through the *personalities* of gasometer, factory, railway-arch, tram and tram-line, and through the poetic elements of rain on the paving-flags, of metropolitan night-time, of sheer streets and roaring fair-grounds :

And all is commonplace and dull—
And all is wonderful.

Once again Anderson expresses his understanding of the pitiful splendour of the inanimate, of the heart, passionate and bright, of man-made things, as in his beautiful poem, "The Viaduct." In "Chalk" he makes us aware of his intense sympathy for the hidden tragedy that is always so much more potent and deep than sorrow which is shown ; and he reveals his feeling for humanity in such poems as "The Master," "A Death in the House," and "Mass Meeting."

In connection with this volume, mention must be made of Anderson's extraordinary gift for describing the vehement drama of the life of the machine. In "The Crane" he reconciles the machine (a beautiful thing as distinct from a poetic thing) with the human soul which gave it its existence :

It lifts the blocks of circumstance
Hewn in the quarried hills of chance,
Wherewith to fling across the deep
Of chaos the rebellious, steep
And perilous causeway of the world's advance.
It lifts the engineries

By which man's vast adventures steam,
Like ships, upon the seas
Of fabulous sunset and moon-bewildered dream.
It lifts the guns
Of his armed science, by whose might
He holds at bay the invading fleets of pain,
And to the plain
Levels the fortresses of night.
It lifts one step, one step, above
Their dangerous and heroic place,
The faith, the hope, the fortitude, the love
and tragic splendour of the human race.

But *The Vortex* is interesting if only for the Homeric dignity the poet brings to the workers in shipyards and iron foundries :

O this Promethean joy,
That plays
With earth's raw soul and undigested heat
As gods with a god's toy !

And in "Adam," the closing poem of the book, he ennobles the toil of all men on earth :

To feel the chain of effort run
Through man, and beast, and earth, and sun,
Binding the world to one immense
And sacred brotherhood ;
Where all things are
—Atom, and God, and Star—
The workmen of eternal good !

We now turn to one of the loftiest of Anderson's philosophical poems, "The Human Dawn," in which, through the person of Adam, he celebrates man's awakening to his individual self, an isolation which seems to mean an exile. But Adam is called from the fear and loneliness of that exile through love of Eve. On those undreamed-of heights of spirit on to which Adam is impelled by love, self-knowledge comes to him, the shy awareness of the body and "the interior world of feeling." And there arises the desire for continuance. Adam fulfils the urge and, beyond passion, discovers the realms of thought.

This is a provocative piece and as soon as this poem opens, comparison with Milton's presentation of Adam and Eve insistently comes into the mind.

As a poet, Milton has suffered a curious fate in English letters. Forgotten and unknown for years after his death (except for the rumour that Dryden put down *Paradise Lost* saying, "this man cuts us all out and the ancients, too !"), it was Addison who, in a series of *Spectators,* awakened the English to the splendour of Milton's poetry. Since then Milton has been so enthusiastically accepted that hardly a word of criticism is brooked against him. Nevertheless, Milton, like good Homer, nods. As a fact, he has a devilish trick of wrecking many a conversation piece in his *magnum opus* by urging his learning on his reader, and he often thinks it beneath his theme to be simple and earthy, a handicap which doubtless arises from his startling lack of association with *any one country district* of his native land. Adam, a primitive man, oppresses us by discoursing like a medieval speculator upon the properties of things, and Eve can be as pedantic as any blue-stocking who ever bored the wits under the table in an eighteenth-century salon.

If ever a poet perfected himself in the "organ-music of speech" Milton did (and it should not be overlooked that Milton was an intensely musical man who, all his life, delighted in playing the organ), but life touches every variety in the whole register of sounds, and the solid great strokes of Milton's blank verse, wonderful as they are in achieving the effect of a mighty choir singing his majestic argument, stagger and become unwieldy as his theme touches the lighter, the more tender and homely aspects of the shared life of our first parents. Milton is unabating in the thunderous beat of his heavy accents and so gives an effect of curious petrefaction. His weight is proper for his argument, but it is too cumbersome for ordinary action where the implacably heavy *da capo* of his structure defeats itself.

Now in certain of Anderson's passages in his "Paradise" there is no doubt that his subtle use of *silence*, the variations of his metre, his humility of approach (humility being a virtue markedly absent in the English Puritans with whom Milton identified himself), and the ease and grace with which he treats of the ever-shifting under-tides of relationship between Adam and Eve, rise superior to the obstinately classical poetry of great Milton. Anderson, standing on tip-toe, moves whole mountains with a whisper. Compare even the two poets' portrait of Eve :

> She, as a veil, down to the slender waist
> Her unadornèd golden tresses wore
> Dishevelled, but in wanton ringlets waved,
> As the vine curls her tendrils . . .—MILTON, *Paradise Lost*, Book IV.

> . . . her hair's luxury poured in one bronze stream
> over her shoulder's ledge, rippled over
> one clear breast and tumultuously fell
> bright-foamed upon the grass . . .—ANDERSON, "Paradise."

How more life and light-pulsing is Anderson's touch—like the open-air sunniness of a Monet after the indoor tapestry-stuffiness of a Cuyp. And this is how the two poets describe the after-eating of the apple :

> . . . but that false fruit
> Far other operation first displayed,
> Carnal desire inflaming ; he on Eve
> Began to cast lascivious eyes, she him
> As wantonly repaid ; in lust they burn :
> —MILTON, *Paradise Lost*, Book IX.

> Out of their caverns of a million years
> crept forth the predatory beasts of love,
> as, with a cry that woke futurity,
> Adam sprang forward . . .
> and to his breast angrily crushed the breast
> and all the yielded loveliness of Eve.
> So for a moment on the splendid brink
> they stood devouring one another's eyes,
> then, blinding sight and burning time to ashes,
> their hot lips flamed into the world's first kiss.
> —ANDERSON, "Paradise."

From celebrating love—the instinct towards race—in "Paradise," Anderson, through Cain, in "Beyond Paradise," shows how the sense of self leads to a need for power, love yielding to pride and self-assertion, crushing wisdom. Cain slays Abel

and becomes an outcast but, longing for the old order of things in Paradise, he returns there and is stricken with remorse at his parents' grief. In contrition and self-absolution (which we may or may not agree with, but this doesn't alter the effect of the splendid poetry in which the struggle is clothed), Cain recovers his manhood and goes forth free again.

From this instinct towards self, the poet carries its development further in "The Tower to Heaven," in which poem-play he exalts the individual, through Nimrod, King of Babylon :

> O Thou God
> whom I have hated all my days, thinking
> that Thou wast set above me, Thou great Will
> riding the nerves of all the universe,
> Thou Life before all life and after death—
> I laugh aloud ! Behold, Thou art Myself ! . . .
> Myself ! that, scattered through the world returns
> to its first unity . . . Myself ! that lifts
> from every being the stretched arms of love
> hungering to Myself . . . Myself ! that wears
> the ultimate solitude of the spirit
> wrapped like a cloak about it. And behold,
> it is the mantle of my divine love
> hung from the shoulders of my divine pride !

The volume *English Fantasies* contains some lyrical and narrative gems : "Wheeldale Ghyll" and its invocation of life since time and race began, is reminiscent of the exquisite lyrical flame of Elizabethan poetry :

> Now had dusk
> fallen and, like a candle
> lit before dark by an unthrifty servant,
> burned the white evening star.

Standing Waters is a series of translucid vignettes which recall the delicacy of Henri de Régnier, who himself loved water, and the two poets meet in a pagan, sylvan world the fragile, fleeting overtones of which have been captured for all time in the music of Débussy.

Attention must also be directed to the poem "Catherine," the story of a scholar's girl, a wraith of Heloise and Dante's Beatrice, in which Anderson reveals the quality of his scholarship and his psychological insight.

The poems in *Transvaluations* show the influence of the great German poet, Rainer Maria Rilke, but the two poets are sharply different in their ultimate founts of inspiration. Rilke was a poet of *intuitive* vision, never losing his child-like sensibility of the vast forlornness of life and of its magical wonders, grasped as a single whole but never understood ; while Anderson seems never to have been a child, but sprung from the head of his Muse, an instantly equipped poet of *intellectual* vision, disciplined by a definite philosophy.

Both poets, however, have the power to make the world anew with the perennial exfoliation of their own dreams : both are fastidious, contemplative, and prophets of religiosity rather than religion. Their "eyes grow dim, with sweet, far-westering dreams."

The crystallisation of Anderson's experience in the poems in *Transvaluations* sets him apart as an English poet. He has the power to give others *a new sense of vision.* He is an "inspired fabulist" who has no notion of the finality of things :

O then, rejoice and know
that in thy soul the Angel of the Lord,
even to the hilt,
has plungèd his sharp sword ;
that in thee, too, as sleeps a babe in womb,
a seed of ice is sown in thy hot loam,
a sleeping death within thy life doth grow ;
rejoice and know
that for thee, too, a bridge is built
wherever thou shalt go.

Finally in *The Curlew Cries,* Anderson returns to nature and fundamental things. In "The Plain" he says :

. . . dumb trivial things of no account,
and yet the sum of whose amount
makes up the heroic total of the world :
ploughing of earth
sowing of grain,
reaping when harvest comes again ;
the Invocation which is birth,
the Litany of breath,
and death,
the Requiescat at the end of all.

or again, in "The Blue Man in the Moss" the poet awakens new thrilling apprehensions:

O to find
translucent secrecies of sound
in the rain's sad
incessant whisper ! and to stand alone,
when all the world around
is one white silence to the sky's pale bourne,
and, hearing nothing while the long days fail
and through the long nights nothing, not go mad !

In the final analysis, Anderson's message is that there is really something wonderful, unfamiliar and undiscovered in everything, anywhere on earth : that, running through the mighty acres of the world-tragedy are countless glittering irrigations of pure joy : and beyond the sway of idiots and philistine upstarts there is an untouched kingdom into which we may escape. He writes, to quote his own words, of :

A world where the wind sings
Softly of things
That once we knew and now no longer know—
Of hopes that met us long ago
Under the gentle morn ;
Of loves that left us long ago
Forlorn.

ELIZABETH MYERS.

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REMBRANDT

A WRINKLED woman tottering to the grave
Had never shunned the sordid atmosphere,
The stench of the canal that year by year
Had been her fate, she knew not she was brave.
But every now and then she could not save
Her courage from the overwhelming fear
That she, Mevrouw van Eyck, would disappear,
As on the rocks the splendour of a wave . . .
If she had known that one day in the street
A fellow-citizen had gazed by chance
Delightedly upon her countenance,
So that the generations without end
Will come into her presence and will greet
One who is more familiar than a friend.

HENRY BAERLEIN.

FOR MY HUSBAND OVERSEAS

I THOUGHT when first we two found each in each
What most we both had sought, that surely this
Was all, the farthest bounds of love, and bliss
Must narrow to a plain content, or reach
Too far and over-balance all. Impeach
My ignorance my love! Now when I miss
Your presence at my side, bereft of kiss,
Of passion's surge and calm, I yet could teach
The lover that I was a grander flight.
But there is more to love, and in this child
All bounds dissolve, all distances unite.
And love is April-gentle, mid-spring mild.
And stone is love. And flower. And dark and bright
No meaning have but love, since first she smiled.

MARGUERITE M. SQUIRE.

THE TALL STRANGER

THE tall stranger wanders
Over the wide moor,
Grey mist behind him
Grey rain before.

Combing his hair
Are the fingers of the wind,
Mighty, invincible,
Marvellously kind.

Where is he wending
With so true a tread,
Who lies not for living,
Weeps not for dead?

Follow him fairly
Fall upon your knee
For he dreams of angels
Holy is he.

And must adventure
Mazed evermore
Grey mist behind him
Grey rain before.

R.A.F.

JEAN KENWARD.

POPE'S "ESSAY ON CRITICISM" AND THE PRESENT DAY

THIS year, being the bicentennial of Pope's death, it is right that his famous works should now receive special attention and be reviewed in the light of modern ideas. By confining this article to one of his poems, I prevent myself from being as eulogistic of his great achievements as I should have liked to have been, but I am writing with THE POETRY REVIEW in mind, one of whose objects is to promote a deeper sense of the "strength and joy" to be drawn from poetry, whereas the "Essay" tends to dishearten young folk. "Joy" implies exhilaration and, in connection with the writing of poetry, has been described as "the divine afflatus." By writing with joy, literary strength is gained: the writer who never forgets the "Alps" still ahead will never go far.

To start at the very beginning; I have followed the advice given by Pope (line 127) and have "traced his Muse upwards to her spring," and thus found the source of the poem and its title. From *Dryden* flowed the primary ideas for many parts of the poem; evidence of same is supplied by the frequency with which he is favourably mentioned or praised, thus proving Pope had his writings in mind all the time; so pronounced is this that it seems true of Pope that

> If he has since outwrit all other men,
> 'Tis with the drops which fell from Dryden's pen

as will be apparent from the following collation.

Dryden wrote, in his "Epistle to the Earl of Roscommon" (28-31):

> The Muses' empire is restored again
> In Charles's reign, and by Roscommon's pen.
> Yet modestly he does his work survey,
> And calls a finish'd Poem an Essay;

As that act of modesty met with Dryden's approval, Pope followed Roscommon's example, and thus we have the "*Essay* on Criticism."

The further influence of the said Epistle is obvious in the following series of examples.

Dryden (5)
> The Grecians added verse: their tuneful tongue
> Made Nature first and Nature's God their song.

Pope (68)
> First follow Nature—
> (88) Those Rules of old discover'd, not devis'd,
> Are Nature still,
> (92) Hear how learn'd Greece her useful rules indites.

Dryden (7)
> Nor stopp'd translation here: for conquering Rome,
> With Grecian spoils, brought Grecian numbers home.

Pope (683)
> Learning and Rome alike in empire grew;
> And arts still follow'd where her eagles flew;

Dryden (11)
> Till barbarous nations, and more barbarous times,
> Debased the majesty of verse to rhymes:
> —the trance
> Of Vandal, Goth, and Monkish ignorance.

Pope (685)

From the same foes, at last, both felt their doom
And the same age saw learning fall, and Rome—
A second deluge learning thus o'er-run
And the monks finish'd what the Goths begun.

Dryden (13)

—a kind of hobbling prose,
That limp'd along and tinkled in the close.

Pope (357)

A needless Alexandrine ends the song
That like a wounded snake, drags its slow length along.

Dryden (28)

The Muses' empire is restored again,
In Charles's reign, and by Roscommon's pen.

Pope (719)

Yet some there were—
Who—here restor'd wit's fundamental laws—
Such was Roscommon, not more learn'd than good.

It will be noted that the above parallel passages include only twenty-six consecutive lines of Dryden.

There are four instances of derivatives from Dryden's "Epistle to Sir Robert Howard." Writing of Howard's poems, he says (1):

As there is music uninformed by art—
So in your verse a native sweetness dwells,
Which shames composure and its art excels.

and (23)

—'tis some happiness that still pursues
Each act and motion of your graceful muse.

Pope (141)

Some beauties yet no precepts can declare,
For there's a happiness as well as care,
Music resembles poetry, in each
Are nameless graces which no methods teach.

Dryden (29)

—this is a piece too fair
To be the child of chance, and not of care.

Pope (363)

True ease in writing comes from art, not chance.

Dryden (41)

Your easier odes, which for delight were penn'd
Yet our instruction make their second end:
We're both enrich'd and pleased, like them that woo
At once a beauty and a fortune too.

Pope (340)

In the bright Muse tho' thousand charms conspire,
Her voice is all these tuneful fools admire;
Who haunt Parnassus but to please their ear,
Not mend their minds; as some to church repair,
Not for the doctrine, but the music there.

Thus, both poets praise "didascalic" poetry (poetry possessing wealth—of wisdom), but Pope was the more emphatic (and the less polite !)

Dryden (75)

His colours laid so thick in every place
As only show'd the paint but hid the face.

Pope (295)

With gold and jewels cover ev'ry part,
And hid with ornaments their want of art.

Dryden, in his "Epistle to Mr. Granville"

This difference yet the judging world will see ;
Thou copiest Homer, and they copy thee.

and in his Prologue to "The Tempest"

Shakespeare, who (taught by none) did first impart
To Fletcher wit, to labouring Jonson art.
He, monarch like gave those, his subjects, law ;
And is that nature which they paint and draw.

Pope (134)

But when t' examine ev'ry part he came,
Nature and Homer were, he found, the same,
Learn hence from ancient rules a just esteem ;
To copy nature is to copy them.

Dryden, in his Prologue to "The Rival Ladies"

Though his plot's dull, as can be well desired,
Wit stiff as any you have e'er admired :
He's bound to please, not to write well ; and knows
There is a *mode in plays* as well as clothes ;

Pope (446)

If faith itself has diff'rent dresses worn,
What wonder *modes in wit* should take their turn ?

Dryden, in the same Prologue, says he would not permit any one who had written a poor play to judge the merits of a play by another author :

For they, like thieves condemn'd, are hangmen made,
To execute the members of their trade.

Pope (30)

Each burns alike, who can, or cannot write
Or with a rival's, or an eunuch's spite.

Dryden, in his Prologue to "Tyrannic Love"

That for small errors, they whole plays decry ;
So hopes—
You equal judges of the whole will be :
They judge but half, who only faults will see.

Pope (235)

Survey the whole nor seek slight faults to find.

Dryden wrote "Alexander's Feast ; or, The Power of Music," in which he told how

Timotheus, placed on high
Amid the tuneful quire,
With flying fingers touch'd the lyre :

and irresistibly swayed the emotions of Alexander the Great from one mood to another. The last verse states

Thus, long Ago,
Timotheus to his breathing flute,
And sounding lyre,
Could swell the soul to rage, or kindle soft desire.

Pope (374)

Hear how Timotheus' vary'd lays surprise,
And bid alternate passions fall and rise:
While, at each change, the son of Libyan Jove
Now burns with glory, and then melts with love;
Now his fierce eyes with sparkling fury glow,
Now sighs steal out, and tears begin to flow:
Persians and Greeks like turns of nature found,
And the world's victor stood subdu'd by sound:
The pow'r of music all our hearts allow,
And what Timotheus was, is Dryden now.

"Timotheus's vary'd lays" having perished a thousand years ago, save a few stray lines, it appears that Pope's eulogy of him would have been unwritten had it not been for Dryden's "Power of Music" and Pope seems to agree with this, judging by the last line, and Dryden's sub-title on previous line.

To conclude the comparison: Dryden and Pope are classed by Hazlitt as "the great masters of the artificial style of poetry." Accepting the statement of that authority, it follows that Pope founded his style on that of his senior, Dryden.

I will now excuse from the "Essay" to give a remarkable instance of Pope's borrowings from Dryden. The sub-title to "Alexander's Feast" is "An Ode in Honour of St. Cecilia's Day." Pope wrote an "Ode for Music on St. Cecilia's Day." Here are the concluding lines of the two pieces:

Dryden

At last, divine Cecilia came,
Inventress of the vocal frame;
Let old Timotheus yield the prize,
Or both divide the crown;
He raised a mortal to the skies;
She drew an angel down.

Pope

Of Orpheus now no more let poets tell,
To bright Cecilia greater pow'r is giv'n;
His numbers rais'd a shade from Hell,
Hers lift a soul to Heav'n.

Pope also wrote (line 297, Essay)

True wit is Nature to advantage dress'd
What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd.

In the above examples, has he tried, and has he succeeded, in dressing the offspring of Dryden's imagination to greater advantage? The reader has the opportunity of making a pleasant and instructive comparison.

In the Essay Pope does not write on criticism in general, but confines his remarks so far as it concerns poetry, and gives advice and warnings to poets and their readers as fully as he does to the critics. His views on the last-named may be gathered from what he says in his "Introduction" to the poem. "The multitude of critics, and causes of them, (lines 28 to 45)," and a study of those lines. The causes will be found in the said lines to be one or more of the following in the case of each critic: bewilderment,

coxcombry, lack of sense, spite and derision, save that there are those who become critics merely because they are "half-learn'd witlings." In contrast to the writings of these, he tells us (line 233) what "a perfect judge" (or critic) would do, well knowing there is no such man, any more than there is a perfect poem, for (254) he says "Whoever thinks a faultless piece (poem or criticism) to see, thinks what ne'er was, nor is, nor e'er shall be." It is true that he states (46) there are those "who *seek* to . . . justly bear a critic's noble name," but the list of *causes* of men seeking to become critics ceases, as he says, at line 45 ; line 46 merely mentions *would-be* critics and thus, lines 46-52 are addressed to the student of poetry, while lines 637-8, "But where's the man—Who to a friend his faults can freely show And gladly praise the merit of a foe ?" prove there was no contemporary of Pope who satisfied him as a critic. Thus, primarily, the Essay is an outlet for his spleen against critics, and he furnishes in himself the example for a couplet he wrote much later in life :

> What crops of wit and honesty appear
> From *spleen*, from obstinacy, hate or fear.

And yet he concludes the "Essay" with an avowal that he owes much of his success as a poet to *a critic !*—one who "Justly knew to blame or to commend"—for in his fine apostrophe to Walsh (735-6) he alludes to himself as

> The Muse whose early voice you taught to sing,
> Prescrib'd her heights and prun'd her tender wing.

The explanation is to be found in the candour of line 18—"Authors are partial to their wit, 'tis true"—for so partial was he to his own, that his gratitude to Walsh, who had highly praised his work, was as overflowing as was his indignation against his detractors. The poem starts :

> 'Tis hard to say, if greater want of skill
> Appear in writing or in judging ill ;
> But, of the two, less dang'rous is th' offence
> To tire our patience, than mislead our sense.

All the wrongful criticism that could have been brought to bear against it, could not have permanently suppressed the popularity of any one of our gems of literature. On the contrary, a critic attempting to "mislead the public sense" by "judging ill," would be sure to receive castigation from a more competent writer who, goaded by the former's errors, would write an article that would lift the libelled work into a higher circle of readers than if it had not received such ill-treatment. Whatever is written finds its level. Merit will always have a champion among posterity, if not before : Pope says so himself (462), "For rising merit will buoy up at last," thus disproving the existence of the danger mentioned in his first four lines.

Line 5 : "Ten censure wrong (wrongly) for one who writes (poetry) amiss ;"

This implies that most poets are right and most critics wrong, but even good poets turn out bad poems at times, and would do so far oftener, but for the "encouragement" of the critics. Let us make an airy balance-sheet of his proposition. Only one poem in ten is worthy of criticism : that one gets all the attention of the critics. Supposing nine of them are wrong and one right, leaves one good poem and one good criticism. Thus, in comparison to poets, critics are not disparaged by the proportion of their number. Pope seems to agree this (11), "In poets as true genius is but rare, True taste as seldom is the critic's share ;" Thus, whereas in line 6 he claimed a ten to one majority for the poet, it is here reduced to equality.

Line 7 : "A fool in verse makes many more in prose."

As above stated, if at all, it is the *wise* poet that makes the fool in prose : the "fool in verse" is ignored. Thus, even unfavourable criticism is a mark of favour.

Line 15 : "Let such teach others who themselves excel."

Pope knew he excelled as a poet, for he said he "lisped in numbers, for the numbers came," and here claims that it gives him the highest qualification to be a critic of poetry. Granting his claim, what becomes of that of a well-known writer who has written a long and widely-read book about some poems and who confesses he has never written a line of poetry himself ? At least, it seems at variance with Pope's exclusiveness in the matter and doubtlessly the said writer could make out a good case for his fitness for the task he undertook.

Line 18 : "Authors are partial to their wit, 'tis true,
But are not critics to their judgments too ?"

The question in the latter line he answered very definitely in the affirmative only a few lines earlier (10), "'Tis with our judgments . . . each believes his own"—thus he is now casting doubt upon his former statement.

Line 60 : One science only will one genius fit ;
So vast is art, so narrow human wit :
Not only bounded to peculiar arts,
But oft in those confined to single parts.
Like kings we lose the conquests gained before,
By vain ambition still to make them more ;

Writing poetry and writing criticisms of poetry are both branches of the vast art of literature : in this poem Pope combines them. Genius is oft "confined to single parts" of a science and it is so with literature. Pope was a king among poets, and though he certainly did not lose former conquests by invading the realm of criticism, but gained a firm foothold there, he appears to have advanced no further in the piece under review. However, Hazlitt was a king among critics and the present-day popularity of several poets owes much to him, but I cannot find that he ever broke into verse, and thus he affords another example of how distinct as a rule are the activities of poets and their critics and proves how remarkable a feat Pope performed in his combination.

Line 215 : A little learning is a dangerous thing ;
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring :
There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain
And drinking largely sobers us again.
Fired at first sight with what the Muse imparts
In fearless youth we tempt the heights of arts,

But more advanc'd, behold with strange surprize
New distant scenes of endless science rise !

Th' increasing prospect tires our wand'ring eyes,
Hills peep o'er hills, and Alps on Alps arise !

The moral of this passage appears to be that if a young man reads a little poetry he will write too much ! the first two lines give advice which no young student of poetical literature, or would-be critic, can take, for no one can tell on starting a subject how far he will proceed. Learning is a gradual process and cannot be obtained by one deep draught. All are entitled, and should be encouraged, to taste a wholesome liquid or subject and should be under no necessity to drink deeply. Here he inveighs against the risk of a little learning, as he did (40) when he mentioned "Half-learn'd witlings," but (590) against that of a *lot* of learning, for there he gives the awful example of "The bookful blockhead, ignorantly read, With loads of learned lumber in his head." What *is* a poor student to do ! He gives no example of the "danger,"

for all that happens to his incautious youth is that he gets tired, from which he will recover by resting, and though "Alps on Alps arise" they are there but to be overcome ultimately.

Pope was only twenty-one when he wrote the poem, so "In fearless youth we tempt the heights of arts" may well be applied to himself regarding this simultaneous assault on poetry and criticism. In the succeeding lines he gives us to understand that had he waited until he was "more advanc'd" the prospect would have deterred him from such a proceeding. With his own success as precedent, surely his advice to others should have been more encouraging, in which case it might have resulted in some other gifted young man producing a masterpiece.

By taking the risk of defeat, youth learns—if only its own limitations—and that little knowledge, far from being dangerous, is a safeguard.

Pope was unfortunate in his choice of an illustration of the unsurmountable, for, a few years after writing his Essay, adventurous youth started climbing the Alps and within a hundred years they had all been conquered.

Line 347 : "And ten low words oft' creep in one dull line :"

Evidently, this line, like several others in this passage, is written to supply its own illustration, for there are ten words in it. The "low" words, are low, creep and dull ; the line itself is admirably made to creep by the use of spondees. But it is submitted that in poetry there are *no* low or dull words. If certain words in a poem give either of such impressions of themselves, it is due to the way they are used, and it is easy to find famous instances where they appear to advantage : for example, "Sweet and *low*," "to-morrow, *creeps* in this petty pace from day to day," and "Or flatt'ry sooth the *dull*, cold ear of death."

Pope says (68) "First follow Nature . . . (73) At once the source, and test, and end of art" ; thus, although line 347 must be considered as expressing his dislike of monosyllabic lines, he used one here, as he did 14, 36, 81, 107 and 113. He "followed Nature" in so doing, for (so many words being derived from the sound with which they are connected) some short words *are* the voice of nature and thus close to "the source . . . of art." For example, birds' names are frequently the bird's note humanly expressed, as cuckoo, peewit, curlew, etc. Hence, short words must be more poetic than long ones, which have been artificially coalesced. Thus, lines 68-9 and 347 appear to be at variance.

As if to prove the weakness and needlessness of long words, Pope wrote (43) "Their generation's so equivocal." Like his "wounded snake," it drags its slow length along ; the poetry it should conserve being lost in the coils. Their breed's so vague," is a fair monosyllabic version of the line.

He denounces (349) "the sure returns of still expected rhymes," but it is a weakness of which he himself has full measure. A cursory run through the poem produced the following : eyes - rise, fire - inspire, fools - rules, find - mind, known - own, offence - sense, write - spite, and wit - writ, all of which appeared three times ; art - part, four times ; fit - wit and past - last, five times. He commends Longinus (679) "Whose own example strengthens all his laws," but, here, does not follow his lead.

Line 357 : "A needless Alexandrine ends the song."

Why "needless" Alexandrine ? Spenser made most excellent use of it without being under the necessity of so doing.

Line 361 : "And praise the easy vigour of a line,
Where Denham's strength and Waller's sweetness join."

Methinks neither of these poets would be pleased with this couplet, for it seems neither is sufficient by himself to satisfy this poet-critic.

Line 363 : "True ease in writing comes from art, not chance."
This is contradicted by (13) ". . . poets . . . must . . . from *Heav'n* derive their light" and by (152) "And snatch a grace beyond the reach of art." Pope seems here to be combating a theory that has never been held by a person of culture—that ease in writing is a matter of luck.

Line 364 : ". . . those move easiest who have learn'd to dance."
Had he said dancers were the most graceful movers we should not have disagreed, but the test of "easiest" is speed and nine lines later he comes over to this view and gives a *runner* as his example of easy movement :

". . . when swift Camilla scours the plain
Flies o'er the unbending corn, and skims along the main."

Line 366 : "The sound must seem an echo to the sense."

Just above, the poet refers to the "needless Alexandrine." May we refer to the needless alliteration of this line ? or are we to consider it as constituting the echo, and that the line provides its own illustration of its statement ? The latter seems to be the idea, as such is the case with the next four couplets. But alliteration does not echo the sense but the sound ; it, like Alexandrines, is used (341) "but to please their ear." Generally speaking, it is difficult, owing to the onomatopoetic origin of words, for the sound *not* to be an echo to the sense.

Line 475 : No longer now that golden age appears
When patriarch-wits surviv'd a thousand years ;
Now length of fame (our second life) is lost,
And bare threescore is all ev'n that can boast ;
Our sons their fathers' failing language see,
And such as Chaucer is, shall Dryden be.

If 233 years is sufficient test, Pope's prophecy has failed. He hazarded that Dryden's language, now known to philologists as Late Modern English, would undergo changes comparable to those to which Chaucer's Late Middle English had been subjected ; but owing to increase in printing and education and our freedom from invasion, our language, since Dryden's day, has been essentially static. The "patriarch-wits" still survive, and Pope himself, owing to his genius and the lapse of time, has been added to their number. His conjunction of Dryden with Chaucer is no doubt due to the former having rewritten some of the Canterbury Tales in his more modern language, in order to interpret them to readers of his day.

Line 380 : "Persians and Greeks like turns of nature found
And the world's victor stood subdued by sound :
The power of music all our hearts allow,"

but that was not the burden of his song (337) :

"But most by numbers judge a poet's song ;
And smooth or rough, with them, is right or wrong :
In the bright Muse, though thousand charms conspire.
Her voice is all these tuneful fools admire :
Who haunt Parnassus but to please their ear,
Not mend their minds ; as some to church repair,
Not for the doctrine, but the music there."

According to *that,* whoever reads poetry for pleasure and not in order to have his mind mended is a tuneful fool ! Surely it is better to go to church, and to read poetry, than to stay away from one and to keep shut the book of the other ? for, in either case, the act can be approved and the motive ignored. Pope's most admired poem is

"The Rape of the Lock," and there is nothing didactic about that. "Tuneful fools" have been "admiring his voice" for two hundred years, content to let him sing what he likes. In what I have said I have merely criticised the song, but praised his rendering, and to emphasise that, I do not think I can make a better conclusion than by bending one of his immortal couplets to my use :

"If to his share some critic errors fall,
His "Essay" read and you'll forget them all."

HOWARD PARSONS.

ISLAND SONG

I WILL meet my love with outstretched palms, early
Before the morning spirit breaks
Or the sun's glory
Weakens to dreams :

Walk only where the light
Strikes sharply on the rock,
Where the balanced eye can see clearly.
Here the island lies quiet in a shifting sea.

So come, my darling, away
And leave behind
The easy smiles and laughter :
The men's minds that change with the wind and tide
The thoughts loose as water
And the peacock pride.

Here we shall soon forget
The fabulous token
In this our final country where
The morning promise is not broken.

SHEILA H. HARRISON.

SONG OF THE MAD MISTRESS

EVEN my heart outsings the singing bird
When some so-well-beloved steals forth to me.
And his desiring eyes are all I see
Till lust's dark language loses look and word.
What music then must from her heart be poured
That welcomes one who for her love is free,
And sings not choked by other loyalty,
Nor by foreknowledge of remorse deterred !

Yet have I sometimes lifted sweeter strain ;
When one lays down the pleasure he would take.
And though desire become a sullen pain
He shuts his soul from mine for honour's sake—
Then love takes on the high ecstatic note
Of steel fineforged to cut the singing throat.

STEPHANIE GASSTON.

FOR PEACE

GREAT calm descend, and lend
To weary earth at last your healing power,
Shower on the war-worn world the light of peace,
The love and beauty only heaven can send.

Long have we waited through the nights of storm,
Through battles hiding the far blaze of stars,
Through utter darkness seeming without end.

And some have gone
Into that dark for ever; some are left
Alone in a silent house where shouting once
Was heard, and laughter that will come no more;
And only ghosts
And pale lost shadows of the dead remain,
And whispers through the twilight in hushed rooms
That it was only love that had an end.

Great calm come down,
Down from the mountains, from the clouds of dawn,
From heights the nearest heaven. There yet is peace
There in a far dim fortress of the hills,
Or of the sky,
With battlements and turrets shining still
That never lost the sunset flames, and now
Are lit at last with the first gleam of morn.

Swiftly descend
From where you tread high places of the world,
From where your beauty yet shines down the dark
With promise from those heights for ever light
It is not love but death that has an end.

W.R.N.S. Quarters, Devonport. DIANA MOMBER.

WHITHER?

THE actor plays his part and be he fair,
Successful, sentimental or in fun,
To him it is conceded something's there,
An audience to view, a thing begun.
The painter makes a mark, the trumpet sounds,
The builder works in marble or in clay;
Their art in matter tangible abounds,
Their works grow fuller, higher every day.
But I sit here and wrestle with my brain,
Clutching a pen that's loathsome to my sight:
An empty page before me for my pain,
And hope alone to aid me in my plight.
What use the song? Where now the poem find?
The matter's in my heart but not my mind.

HARVEY MADAMS.

PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS AN ANARCHIST

IN this age of increasing specialisation it is pleasant to recall the spacious days of the Renaissance and the ideal of the Whole Man. Sir Philip Sidney's is the name which springs most readily to mind. Poet, soldier and statesman, he was a model for his time. Perhaps history has given his name an added glow, but strip the man of his romantic associations and the idea behind his life remains, admirable in concept. Life was for him, in Sainte-Beuve's expression, a book, with every experience, of mind or of body, a chapter. I do not think it out of date to admire the Whole Man; he is still amongst us, and I can think of no one who comes nearer to the ideal to-day than Herbert Read.

There is nothing of the courtier about Herbert Read. He is of peasant, not aristocratic stock, but he has already managed to combine, in a life which is still in its prime, enough activities to have satisfied even Renaissance standards. He has found time not only to write or edit forty-five books, but to be a bank clerk, a university student, a soldier, a Civil Servant and a professor. Amongst other things he is a poet, an art critic and a philosopher. It is time there was a book about him—and there is: a collection of six essays, edited by Henry Treece and produced by Faber and Faber, and entitled *Herbert Read—an introduction to his work by various hands.*

Mr. Treece himself "introduces" Herbert Read; E. H. Ramsden writes on Read's philosophy of art and H. W. Häusermann on his development. Robert Melville contributes an essay on "The first sixty-six pages of *The Green Child*" (a prose allegory of Read's); another article by Mr. Häusermann divides Read's poetry into tidy categories and a short philosophical tit-bit by J. F. Hendry is added to taste.

Herbert Read the art critic and writer on aesthetics is well-known. He is a clear logical and progressive thinker and his work is justifiably held in high esteem; but Herbert Read the poet is quite another matter. His poetry is not well-known, nor is it widely appreciated, and in view of Mr. Treece's determined attempt to place it on a level with the work of some of the greatest names in English literature it may be instructive to consider why.

Herbert Read began writing poetry before the first World War. He was influenced by the imagist school and his early "Eclogues" are for the most part fragmentary descriptions of pastoral scenes, of which the following is one of the best examples:

> I can just see the distant trees
> And I wonder whether they will
> or will not
> Bow their tall plumes at your passing
> In the carriage of the morning wind.

and this one of the worst:

> The farm is distant from the high-road
> half a mile;
> The child of the farm
> does not realise it for several years;

Read's war poems are admirable examples of restraint and "emotion recollected in tranquillity," varying in technique from the downright prose of "Kneeshaw Goes to War" to the queer half-melody of "The End of a War." It is something between the surging, singing freedom of Whitman and the staccato irresponsibility of D. H. Lawrence which makes the ear long for one or the other. The execution falls short of the thought again and again. This is important because Read writes in accordance with his principles, and principles are his strong point. "The modern poet," he said in 1928, "has no uncompromising theory of metrical composition. His theory, if

any, is that it is sufficient to be a poet and to be honest with oneself, and that the rest follows naturally. To be an extremist on the question of metre would be to repeat the mistake of Wordsworth on the question of language. The modern poet does not deny the right of regular verse to exist, or to be poetic. He merely affirms that poetry is sincerity and has no essential alliance with schemes of any sort." And, later, in *Annals of Innocence and Experience*: ". . . I think I may say that by the end of the war I had discovered myself and my style—that is to say, I had made an equation between emotion and image, between feeling and expression. So long as I was true to this equation, I need not be afraid of influences or acquired mannerisms. Poetry was reduced to an instrument of precision . . ."

Taking these two statements in conjunction with Read's philosophy of anarchism —that the form of any particular society or work of art shall arise spontaneously, from within, and shall reject any imposed standards (an admirable philosophy were the world inhabited by Herbert Reads) it would appear that the poet, before writing a poem, disciplines his thought so as to cut away all irrelevancies and adornments and sets down the essence of his inspiration with a lofty disdain for the cunning artifices of poetic composition—"and the rest follows naturally." A radical and, on the face of it, an appealing theory; and yet the result is strangely unsatisfying, for in truth nowhere is the gulf between theory and practice greater than in this instance. I may be wrong, but it seems to me that it is just where Read manages to escape from his mental straitjacket, like that other theoriser, William Wordsworth, that he gives an indication of his greatness.

Perhaps the best example of this is "The End of a War," in which the verse almost does justice to the thought. Yet even here the poet seems to remember from time to time that he really must not make concessions to the ear of his reader and jars him with a prose line. One passage—perhaps the most memorable in the poem—is marred by a caesura of unpleasant proportions in the second line:

> Faith in self comes first, from self we build
> The web of friendship | from friends to confederates
> And so to the state . . .

Has Herbert Read a faulty ear, or does he deliberately encourage the hiatus, or is it that, anarchist to the last, he just doesn't care? The discipline he has imposed upon himself does not extend to technicalities. It is a pity. One has only to read the magnificent artifice of Shakespeare to realise that it is not enough "to be honest with oneself, and that the rest follows naturally." I would, moreover, be very surprised if the brilliant imagery of this poem of Read's followed naturally in the sense that a letter or a report flows smoothly from brain to paper:

> This high-caught hooded Reason broods upon my wrist.
> Fettered by a so tenuous leash of steel.
> We are bound for the myrtle marshes many leagues away
> And have a fair expectation of quarry . . . .
>
> Will the plain aye echo with that loud hullallo!
> Or retain an impress of our passage?
> We have caught Beauty in a wild foray
> And now the falcon is hooded and comforted away.

Read's satirical verses vary from the obscurity of "Equation" to the refreshing simplicity of "Huskisson in Arcadia," of which one line, "Koy-bé, koy-bé, he calls to the lambs," rings in the ear like a far, faint bell. Elswhere there are occasional echoes of Eliot, and one poem, "A Short Poem for Armistice Day," reminds one of Day Lewis's manner.

The work, collected under the heading of "Lyrical Poems" in Read's *Poems, 1914-34*, is too often marred by the staccato diction which has already been commented on. To come upon a poem like "Device" in this section, or "Retreat" in "Longer Poems," is to realise what the poet could have done had he not so doggedly followed his "sufficient-to-be-honest" theory. Contrast this (called "Flight"):

> The serial feathers an extending
> imbricated N: flexed;
> conceal the struts when taut . . . .

with the first lines of "The Retreat":

> When in some sudden hush of earth
> The pulsing rhythm is lost, and I am alone
> With all those melancholy forces of the mind
> That wait for empty moments, with no sound
> Of living wings, or vocal throats, or any of the subtle
> Crepitations that betray
> The sense in things . . . . .

where, although the influence of Wordsworth is obvious, there is no hint of pastiche.

But what does Mr. Henry Treece have to say about all this? Well, Mr. Treece has worked himself into a fine frenzy. He sees the hand of the master in the most unexpected places and launches a series of breathless eulogies. He is the disciple—

> "That Read is unable to present us with a certain solution—the function of the philosopher as philosopher, and not of the poet as philosopher—is but a reminder that he has not yet acquired divine status . . . ."

and the "stupefied" admirer—

> "And the thing that always stupefies me at this point is, that Read, who is representative of more phases of human recognition than any other writer living to-day, can externalise those phases with complete clarity, so that the image is never blurred, the language never misused, the high standard of selection never impaired."

Never? A big claim. One might reply that the "complete clarity" is often obscure, the "never-blurred image" sometimes commonplace, the language, if not misused, too frequently prosaic; and if the high standard of selection leads to such lines as:

> Soul: I hover round your fameless features
> barred from heaven by light electric . . .

it is time the standard were changed. It is not to be expected that any poet will be perfect, and Read is as fallible as any. Mr. Treece's extravagances contrast with the gentleness and restraint of his subject. It is rather like hearing a loud-voiced guide extolling a district one has loved for many years, and including the local gas-works in his praise as well.

Mr. Treece's style is truculent. He seizes the opportunity to comment unfavourably upon Auden, Day Lewis, MacNeice, and whoever else is not safely locked away in the private and intellectual fairyland of the *New Apocalypse*. He is the little foe of all the world, unless it subscribes to his opinions, or writes in a style he approves of. His critical attitude, moreover, seems to veer with the wind. Compare this passage, from an article written in Spring, 1942, and speaking of Geoffrey Grigson:

> "As choreographer of that fantastically prim little Dance of the Image, he used Mr. Eliot's 'objective correlative' as sanction for numerous impersonal word-columns, each line a picture, each picture as safely dead as a stuffed trout."

with these extracts from the volume under review, praising a poem by Read and comparing it with Blake's "Songs of Experience":

> "In this consideration of Read's maturity, the inevitability of his thoughts and expression, there is a statement by T. S. Eliot which seems to me apposite. It says, 'The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an *objective correlative* . . .'"

and secondly (speaking of an obscure and not particularly memorable verse from "Equation"):

> "As I have said, I believe that piece of writing to be near perfection; so near the sun, in fact, that our eyes are blinded to its poetry, and can only marvel at its incredible exactness, at the mind whose incisive power is such that it can perform so spectacular a feat of cosmic surgery. It is *le mot juste* carried on to a plane where few readers can be expected to follow. It is the very embodiment of the 1913 Imagist Manifesto . . ."

Is the *Apocalypse* pleased to approve of Eliot's "objective correlative" and the style and principles of the Imagists, or is it not? Not that it matters a lot, but it is reasonable to expect a consistent attitude from a critic.

So much for Mr. Treece. The other writer on Read's poetry, H. W. Häusermann, gives a balanced commentary. He is fair and helpful in his critical attitude, examining in turn the various categories into which Read has divided his *Poems, 1914-34*, and emerging with the conclusion that:

> ". . . Those who like their lyrical verse expansive, richly orchestrated, and very explicit, will find little to their taste in his poetry and they had better not waste their time trying to enjoy it . . ."

with which statement few would quarrel. Mr. Häusermann's other article, called "The Development of Herbert Read," is a translated extract from a book published in Germany in 1938 and deals with Read's various theories and attitudes of mind. It is a competent, if involved, study, although whether Read would agree with all Mr. Häusermann's assumptions and interpretations of his inner thoughts is a moot point.

Robert Melville, another Apocalyptic, examines the style of, but does not succeed in making much clearer, the first sixty-six pages of *The Green Child*, an allegorical adaption of a folk tale. He rightly praises Read's "clear, economical style," which is used to the greatest advantage in the latter's reportage of war events ("Ambush" and "In Retreat" are excellent examples).

Read's own explanation of his philosophy of art comes, suitably and interestingly garnished, through the pen of E. H. Ramsden; and J. F. Hendry, the third member of the *Apocalypse* to contribute to this book, sympathetically examines Read's personal philosophy. The latter's quotation from "Annals of Innocence and Experience" on character and personality I found the most striking passage in the whole of the six essays.

That is the lot. If I have concentrated largely upon technical criticism of Read's poetry, it is because insufficient consideration has been given to this important matter and not that I value metrical perfection and melody above intrinsic poetic worth. Mr. Treece has produced an interesting but uneven volume. His own pontifical manner overshadows the generally valid criticisms of the other contributors, and yet—provided he takes a large enough pinch of salt—the reader may be assisted to appreciate parts of Read's work he did not appreciate before.

The truth is, I humbly submit, that Herbert Read is primarily a thinker and theoriser. His honesty, sincerity and industry compel admiration, and both in art

and literature he has shown himself to be a far-sighted and penetrating critic. But he is not a great poet. Important perhaps, but great, no; and—I say this although my affection for parts of Read's verse is great and my admiration for the man and his ideals unfeigned—while it is not quite a sow's ear out of which Henry Treece endeavours to make his silk purse, the material is certainly not a true product of *bombyx mori*.

GEOFFREY MOORE.

TO RONNIE

In reply to a nostalgic poem from Shaibah, P.A.I. Force.

DEEP in the desert's dusty gold,
Have you forgotten, far away,
The freshness of an English day?
And is the ecstasy of spring
A distant, legendary thing?
And is the English summer's glory
A half-remembered fairy-story,
That someone told?

Then close your eyes, and see again
The blossom trees like virgin brides,
The hedgerow where the violet hides,
And where the sun's gold swords have thrust,
The green grass flecked with pollen dust;
Forget the sand beneath your feet
And feel again the breath so sweet
Of English rain.

The frowning hills in splendour stand;
The lakes in tranquil beauty lie,
And mirror England's changing sky,
And shadowed roads that beckoned you
Melt in the dim horizon's blue.
And in between the briar lace
The wild rose lifts a wondering face
To this dear land.

And every path and tree and hill
You knew and loved with English pride,
Still stands, unmoved by time or tide;
Still sun-swept wheat waves in the breeze
And still the majesty of trees
Moves men to tears in pride of birth.
She stands, supreme in all the earth,
And always will.

Darlington, 24-12-43. P. HALL.

Three Lyrics by STELLANOVA OSBORN:

VEIL AND VISION

In the hours between the dark and the coming of day
Mist broods on the face of the waters of the St. Marys
As at the dawn of creation.

Birth is the mist upriver, whence it flows,
Death is the mist downriver, whither it goes,
Life is the glimpse of river that lies between.

There is no beginning
And there is no ending.
Thou art the sun and the cloud and the all-encompassing sea.

FLUX

Still burning are the fires of earth.
Out of a cornfield, under the eyes of men,
A new volcano rises.
Around the world runs a hot flame
That shall melt fetters,
Fuse humanity.

O COME LET US BE JOYFUL

Gold bracken ring around a rosy maple!
How dead the heart that would not dance and sing!
Where on the earth or in what kind of heaven
Could be a lovelier thing!

Poulan, Georgia. STELLANOVA OSBORN.

EMBERS AND FLAME

NO candle-flow of softness lights my way
Along a rambling trail of humbleness,
Whose need is only for soul-quietness
As misty moonlight veils the ending day.

But lightning-lashed the path to reach my goal,
With thunder-echoes rolling endlessly,
And drums of wind-scourged rain unceasingly
Beating a maddening tom-tom in my soul.

Slow is the burning in a passive life,
Chaining a heart that should blaze gloriously,
Nor giving of itself abundantly—
Embering slowly, never whipped by strife.

My flame leaps high, consuming self and me;
A blackened trail marks its intensity.

COURTNEY E. COTTAM.

THE TWO WORLDS

HOW near the earth drifts to its source,
Each day at dawn, each night that goes,
'Tis then the world, by some vague force,
Draws to the realm from which it rose.

The sunrise and the sunset hour
Bring to the mind by some strange sense
The presence of an unseen Power,
And life's unsolved magnificence.

LESLIE GREENE.

OVERSEAS GIFTS

SEND him the only perfect gift,
A faithful and a loving thought;
A daily, hourly present shipped
From the heart's open port.

Your love, a winged messenger
Arriving, may fulfil his need;
Or stay his hand, or minister
To wounds that inward bleed.

Send him your strength, your faith, your love,
No gifts despatched him overseas
Will reach him safer, nor will prove
So worthy him as these.

Perchance your thought of faith and trust
May come to set his spirit free;
Or raise him fallen in the dust
Of some Gethsemane.

For who may tell what storm cloud lies
Above, nor where its force will break,
Which he beneath those alien skies
Must temper for your sake.

JOHN F. WADDINGTON.

Four Poems by P. VANE-TEMPEST:

WAIT NO MORE

Too soon the room is dim, the candles gutter
The little wax of life too surely drips,
So wait no more, throw wide your heart's proud shutter
Enthrall the precious moment ere it slips.
Say that you love me, for the heavens mutter
And the impatient moon is in eclipse.

Words that the gods have blessed are not for buying
(And thieves shall find the Treasury too strong)
Such words as woo the minutes from their flying
And break the hollow silence into song.
Life is a breath, a laugh, a sob, a sighing,
But oh my love, remember Death is long.

THE WOUNDED PILOT TO HIMSELF

There are such moments in our earthly span
As destined as the seasons to fulfil
Their claim to beauty ere the beauty spill;
Moments so fine they seem Olympian.
But we who ride as gods may fall as man,
And though the heavens echo to our will,
Though Nature holds her breath and Time stands still,
We dare not call the sky our partisan.

England has wrapped herself in bold disguise,
And flaunts the fiery tapestries of war,
But I who watch the battle in the skies
Weep that my wings are pinioned to the floor.
Have pity, oh my country, realise
He suffers most who may not serve you more.

SOLDIER'S FAREWELL

This is the garden I must leave,
These lawns, this green, the lichened wall
Exchange for sand and wastes where no birds call.
I shall not hear the wind achieve
The first ripe apple's gentle fall
Nor see the phloxes dropping one by one
Before I meet the thunder of the gun.

And this my wife who must remain,
She who has been to me so long
A habit and a solace and a song.
She who makes tears and laughter twain,
Weaker than I and yet more strong.
Dear God that I may find when war shall cease
My wife, my garden, blossoming in peace.

"CONSIDER THE LILIES"

We share the seasons with the birds, the trees,
The animals and every breathing thing
That from the same divine volition spring,
And still may learn no happiness from these,
They do not mourn, who can no longer please,
The bird will sleep who can no longer sing,
At dusk the weary cricket sheathes his wing,
At noon the rose surrenders to the bees.

We who complain and easily despair,
Who crave the morrow ere the day be spent,
Shall we not trust our destinies and share
With bird and tree and plant their deep content?
For like the lilies of the field we wear
A robe as lovely and as innocent.

P. VANE-TEMPEST.

SANCTUARY

WEARY of all the ways and works of men
turn thee, my soul, turn thee agen
into the secret places where the wings
of fiery cherubim surround the heart
that is creation's centre; find once more
—as Israel's prophets in the days of yore
found in the crash of Empires rent apart—
Peace in the innermost; when ruin rings
our modern Ninevah, whose gates of brass
succumb before the blows of Babylon,
find an enduring silence, a great peace,
where all tumultuous ways of living cease,
where all things passing and ephemeral, pass.

I will abide where the Eternal is,
rapt in the passion of an utter calm,
I will know no man nor what ways are his,
fleetness of foot, nor any strength of arm,
nor striving, nor begetting, nor delight,
nor any hours of the day or night.

Feeble and flickering is the heart of man
as is a small flame in a gusty place,
and woefully does he live out his span
between the two immensities of space,
while like a wild thing in a narrow pen
he rages with his tragic fellow-men.

He tortures and is tortured, he despairs;
he spreads his desolation like a net
which all the loveliness of life ensnares,
breaking it in the springes he has set;
yet, victim also, in his heart's distress,
he cries out for his murdered happiness.

He has confounded all the green earth's ways,
he has put discord in the ambient seas,
the golden promise of the sunny days
he has denied; no more he thinks of peace
in gazing on the heaven's unsullied calm;
not peace he finds but war, not weal but harm.

I will abide within the place
where no sound is, nor any life
to mar the calm, eternal face
that knows not movement nor the name of strife;
I will go down to the eternal deep
where no act is and even thought must sleep.

JOHN PRESLAND.

THE WHITE VALLEY

MAY is in the valley
Yet fields of wheat and barley
Are furrow deep in snow,
The cherry and the sloe
Are whiter than before ;
And trees grown stiff with hoar
Dissolve in rootless blooming
Sun-loosed into the foaming,
Loud-rolling, hill-sprung stream.
White pastures gloom and gleam
In cloud-crossed sun to-day
This muffle-blossom May.
And here this morning early
A girl walked up this valley ;
Her footsteps in the snow
Sank scarcely down below
The crust, so light was she,
And yet how wearily
She moved for one so fair—
As though a dark despair
Had burdened all her youth.
And then I saw her clearly :
The life she once loved dearly
Was blighted with the truth.
For, wedded to another,
She knew her own true lover
She knew him then as surely
As Spring that comes too early
Must soon be overtaken—
Her sweetest hopes were shaken
As rough winds shake a flower—
Love had to be forsaken
And hidden from that hour.
"But how can love be sundered
When two are one ?" she pondered,
And paused awhile to rest,
And prayed that this white valley
The frigid hills grown pearly
Might answer her request.
She saw the gorse spikes silvered,
And young birds, dumb, bewildered
In cloud-sown sprays of snow,
She saw the sun uncover
The bee-deserted clover ;
While growing far below
The strong, dark-tented laurel
Sheltered the wan wood sorrel.
"All things are watched," she said,
"Protected, warmed and cherished,
Then why have my hopes perished ?
Is only my heart dead ?
Such life is not for living,
Spring cannot stay in giving
Its glory to the snow."
And then the valley called her,
The still, white calm enthralled her,
Compelling her to go
Where stood the ageless boulders
Beneath white, transient shoulders
Impervious to change.
The truth came to her slowly
Among the mountain glory
As something real and strange :
The love in all creation
Required her generation,
Her purpose and her part,
A love not her's for keeping
In solitude and weeping
To stifle in her heart,
But far beyond the vision
Of human kind's horizon—
And then, at last, she knew
Real love from bright illusion
And truth without delusion.
She saw herself anew.
And looking down the valley
Where frozen fields of barley
And wheat stretched far below
As white as in the morning,
She felt the second-coming
Of Spring beneath the snow.

PHOEBE HESKETH.

[Mrs. Hesketh, who has published a volume of poems, will be better known to readers of THE POETRY REVIEW—to which she has been a contributor for many years—as Phoebe Rayner.]

SONG TO AN OLD PLUM TREE

ANCIENT deceiver, sing your song,
Glitter again with petalled snow,
April has fooled you overlong
Who soon must go.

Blackened by time, serenely bowed
With all the labour of your prime,
Age leaves you yet with bloom endowed
To smile at Time.

Shall you be shamed your feast is spread
Only with honey for the bee,
That, last year, two plums only fed
A wasp and me ?

Do you not beautify an end
Which takes from death the grief of dying,
Who not to his assault will bend,
Whose flag is flying—

Not in defiance, but that yet
My heart should hold no thought of sorrow,
But in your gaiety forget
The fruitless morrow.

April, 1944. H. W. HARDING.

TESTIMONY

(*For Josephine Hancock Logan*)

"WHEN *I face Death,*" you queried low, "*shall I*
Have qualified ?" Beloved, never doubt !
The lowliest, the lordliest throughout
Your universe of lovers testify,
"Long since ! Long since !" in reverent reply.
How very like you, this ! to turn about,
Within your questing mind, abstruse, devout
Interrogation : "*Have I ?*" "*Whither ?*" "*Why ?*"

You know the answers, now. Your journeying
Beyond all doubt, all distance, all despair
Into the ultimate eternal Spring,
Irradiates all thought. In that Land where
No "*Shade Is Drawn,*" in full fruitioning,
You know ! You know ! You are alive ! Aware !

RUTH CRARY CLOUGH.

[Mrs. Logan was for many years President of The Poetry Society's Chicago Centre : her *Collected Poems*, from which the above query was taken, was noticed in a recent issue of THE POETRY REVIEW, in which also her lamented death has been recorded.]

SPRING SONG

NOT while the May-trees blossom, not while the curlews sing
The sudden sweet undying wordless ecstasy of spring,
Not while the grass is tender, and the living clouds of lace
Foam white along the hedgerows, and the starwort lifts her face
As the woodcock croaks and circles, and the buttercups are gold,
And the faithful long to-morrows of the summer months unfold,
Not now, O my Creator, shall my bursting heart awake
To look upon Thy glory and to praise Thee, lest it break.

Not while the pulses quicken, not while the arm is strong,
And children's calling voices fill the universe with song,
And myriad thoughts come crowding till the eager brain must leap
Alert and swift and tireless, to steal the night from sleep:
Not while, unfailing as the stars and dearer than the light,
Shine steadfast friends to guide me to the lovely and the right,
Not now, O my Redeemer, shall my yearning spirit try
To think upon Thy fullness and to bless Thee, lest it die.

Not now: but when the darkness falls and winter winds are chill,
(And lo, already they are white, the snow clouds on the hill);
When Thou, my God, forsakest me, and nothing shall remain
But loneliness and weariness and doubt and fear and pain—
Then, then will I remember, and in thousandth part repay
In Thy heaven-sent December the unending debt of May;
And none shall know the way is rough or guess the sky is dark,
I will outshine the Pleiades, I will outsing the lark.

BARBARA LEA.

THE ABSENT MASTER

I SEE the Church as a House enclosed by walls,
Her priests the servants hurrying down the bleak
And dusty stairs or through the unlit halls
To say their Master keeps His room and, meek
In mien, to warn enquirers who may seek
To turn and watch blank windows should a Face
They love shine forth. But others, passing, speak
Of catching sight of One Who walked apace—
Surely the Master striding through the market-place.

JANE SCOTT PARSONS.

MEETING

SO light my glance as I passed you by,
So slight the smile you gave in reply,
As we met, and we passed on the stair;
But your eyes held mine for a moment, and smiled—
You were Mother, and I was Child—
So deep was the understanding there.
And all at once I was young again,
Around my neck was a daisy chain—
And buttercups in my hair!

CASSANDRA PAGE-TURNER.

POETS AND PRETENDERS

ONE does not construct a poem; something, somewhere, waves a wand and mysteriously the mind becomes a mere amanuensis following a dictation with all the excitement of an underling in the presence of a master who will disappear as unceremoniously as he came. We began our labours this time with a determination to apply our mind, as far as we were able, to the discovery of when and how often the spell had come upon this new batch of poets and *per contra* how many of these books represented the intellectual labours of the industrious clerk forced to carry on in the master's absence as best he may.

So we came to *Musings* by Percy L. Mundy, privately printed and unpriced. Mr. Mundy mused in vain, for though this seemingly idle frame of mind constitutes the most imperative summons to the wielder of the wand, he remained aloof. We wonder whether the author expected him, indeed whether he appreciated his indispensability, for he has produced a book which seems to be content with the technical competence of its construction. As a result, there has appeared a volume for which we have no response, for it is the miraculous virtue of inspiration in a poet that it should immediately touch other men's deeps. Ours were unstirred.

The next book came with an acknowledgment of the infinite distance between poetry and verse, a concise statement of the truth which we, rather grandiloquently, embroidered at the beginning of this article. *V, Our Finest Hour* by Hilda Trevelyan-Thomson (price 2s. 6d.) takes for its theme a subject so fatally easy to write verses about and, for those who lived through the minutes of that hour as blindfolded spectators, so inapt for inspiration, that we were hardly expectant, as we opened it, to find that the authoress's humble approach had enabled her to bridge that infinite distance, here and there; we are within sight of the other side of it with:

> The men, who gladly threw their youth
> Into the crucible of pain.

and there with:

> And Phoenix-like, winged victory will arise
> From ashes in a street.

But still the subject is too great a handicap even when tackled with humility and sincerity. The deeper feelings refuse to respond with any passion to the occasional gleams that light the abominable darkness of war. The poem which we preferred out of them all is that entitled "Lines to a Small Son," where a mother's heart beats surely and truly to a high emotion, beside which war is seen to be a weariness and a spiritual vexation.

> The school bell rings; gaily I wave farewell,
> Then watch you go, keen, fearless, valiant,
> Down the long path and through the heavy door.

How beautiful is simplicity and how high one flies on the wings of truth. Together they make an irresistible power, which is the power of true poetry and, passing from the uncomplicated and simply stated thoughts of a mother losing her son to the community of his school for the first time, to the consciously composed work of Robert Greacen in *One Recent Evening* (Resurgam, 2s.) we were more than ever persuaded that poetry is an emotional and not an intellectual affair. To call Mr. Greacen a modern would be a dangerous proceeding, since he does not conform to the incoherency of that self-sufficient school and he is certainly a lover of rhythm and rhyme. The trouble is in a too studied diction, which, in spite of its power, adds no strength, and occasionally misleads into an obscurity of phrase. Such things as

. . . . . her surging soul
Was ignorant of fear and the curve of sorrow at the heart

leave one unimpressed by the rotundity of unhappiness. There is, all through, a noticeable endeavour to impress with the choice of words. That these are good words and, in the main, just, although just a little off-centre, is not the point. Poetry requires them not—in fact they intrude—for a purpose which is solely concerned with the fundamentals and which finds words of the purest simplicity the only vehicle for emotion. Take this extract from "Cycling to Dublin" :

Pulling the dead sun's weight through
County Meath
We cycled through the knotted glass of afternoon,
Aware of bright fog in the narrow slot of breath,
And the cycle's rhyming, coughing croon.

Where and why is this poetry and not prose ? Simply through the choice of words which would be inadmissible in the latter. This is to make poetry by poetic license and it most emphatically will not do. Words become, by this heresy, too important by half, become an end in themselves when, of course, they are merely a scaffolding, a frame-work—where paper and ink are a foundation—for the proper presentation of something behind and beyond our daily awareness. Still, in their class, these verses are very competent and, viewed as literature, are first rate. Much of the diction adds undoubted distinction to the work and the capacity to use words so is not common nor easy to acquire. These questions ask themselves at the end, however, "What has been acquired and has it value ?" We believe the answers are "little, and no." The appeal is as transient as that of all mere cleverness, and Mr. Greacen has succumbed, as is so often the fate of the gifted, to the seductiveness of exercising his talent and has been satisfied to remain upon that level.

The difficulty of criticism is never more acute than when one is called upon to exercise it in relation to work which does not pretend to have an appeal for mature minds, work which advertises itself indeed as for children at the nursery stage. There are two volumes of this sort in our collection for this issue ; the first, *Young Hopeful* by Jennie Dunbar, illustrated quite beautifully by Charles Robinson, R.I., and published by Herbert Jenkins at 7s. 6d., strikes us as a very acceptable and educative present for any tiny tot with an ear for music or one which might be developed. There is all the rhythm and music which such a mission calls for and the subject matter is nicely calculated always to soothe and entice the budding intelligence. For its educational value we recommend it strongly to the juvenile public for which it is intended. It may well inculcate a love of poetry which, in after years, will compensate for or, at least, ameliorate the effects of the troubles which mankind is so industrious to bring down upon itself. The second, *Barley-corn Billy* by Wilfred Thorley, illustrated by Ernest H. Thomas (Herbert Jenkins, 7s. 6d.) is, although addressed to the same audience, dissimilar in its approach. The appeal is, at times, more whimsical and the treatment, while as simple, is more concerned to achieve poetry as we adults know it. This is as it should be, and while from the age of the children in the illustrations it would seem to be intended for the same tender minds as *Young Hopeful,* it contains poems which could appeal to children of all ages, and even those greybeards who have been born again into a love of beauty and simplicity.

Whereon I make my window fast,
And then a blind bat flies at it ;
And in the panes I see aghast,
My own eyes making eyes at it.

Down comes the blind. My fingers move
Along the keyboard, fain of light;
Again I hear the cooing dove,
And all the air's a rain of light.

Could anything be more nicely calculated to put common-sense in its place and make likeable citizens.

Columbia University Press sent us the next volume by the hand of the Oxford University Press, *Blind Dawn* by Stanley Kidder Wilson (10s.). This is described by its publishers as a long personal poem treating of the gradual dulling of love by a long marriage. To begin with, of course, we are aware that Mr. Wilson speaks only for himself, since it is a personal poem but, nevertheless, we sense an unreality in the description as though time dulls love as a necessary result of some conflict between them. Indeed, the author does not appear to credit any such belief and in some forty pages of free verse, full of unusual and arresting phrases, has shown quite plainly that he is quite unaffected by any such unmeaning thing as the ticking of a clock. It may be, of course, that the emotion, love, needs to be defined.

There is fire and an urgent strength in this poem which does not rely at all upon its diction for its effect, however the one may intensify the other. The cerebration is secondary always to the emotional drive and, consequently, we are never asked to cope with anything but simplicity, whatever subtlety of emotion is recorded for us and whatever strong-winged imaginative flight the author takes. To quote from such a poem is not easy when the level is so well maintained and space is at a war-time premium. The book is in the form of a letter from the husband to the wife, one of those letters that get written after long pondering and suddenly become eloquent with all the doubt and unhappiness of years. The letter of a heart still ardent to another which, apparently lacking the same depth, is out of reach. After the initial argument, the recalling of early days and some enquiry as to when and why the conjugal path forked, the poem says:

By this time, dear, I think you must suspect
That the "I love you" here engraved is not
The vespers of the incandescent years,
Or yet a lavender echo of Old Refrain,
To either of which you'd turn the same sweet cheek,
"Silly, who said you didn't?" But weigh my plight;
If I, straight out, let go even half my heart—
Gail, you'd deduce rum fever, probably mix
A physic . . . .

And this is the kernel of the theme and a typical example of the direct and exciting treatment which does full justice to the matter and leaves upon the reader's mind an impression of deep emotional sincerity.

Perhaps, however, the most unusual volume in the pile so far was the next, also a transatlantic import, *News of the Phoenix* by A. J. M. Smith (Ryerson). This is full of poetry of a quieter submissive sort, the poetry of a man who observes both inwardly and outwardly with the same close absorption and finds words to say what he feels and sees which usurp none of our attention, excepting for the meaning they convey. In the first poem he sets his own standard in:

Yet shadows I have seen, of me deemed deeper
That backed on nothing in the horrid air.

This is an example of that *multum in parvo* which, for us, indicates the true poetic gift

which always says more than it intends, but whose by-products of meaning are always so closely relevant. On the next page is another example of the same quite unstraining eloquence without oratory which, by its concluding line, raises what is, till then, little more than a trite fragment to a significance which is born of the menace of the last word "drum." The reader is made conscious in a flash of the inexorable menace of time and its endless and indifferent passing beneath and through creation. Let us quote it:

When night lets down her hair
Over the pale blossom
Of the world, far, far from here
With sealed eyes, still bosom
And folded feet I fare
To that country under dream
Where Eternity and Time
Are the two sides of a drum.

There are many more poems in the book, offering in the same unstudied conciseness of language as wide a vista. We cannot forbear to give one more, entitled "Epitaph":

Weep not on this quiet stone:
I, embedded here
Where sturdy roots divide the bone
And tendrils split a hair,
Bespeak you comfort of the grass
That is embodied ME,
Which as I am, not as I was,
Would choose to be.

And yet another from America, *Sky Ways* by Helen T. Douglas Robinson (Bruce Humphries, $1.50). This is not, as its title might seem to indicate, devoted to flying men and war, but is unconfined in its themes. Miss Robinson sees war as an incident only in the long development of life and it does not cloud and limit her vision as with so many who write books of verse. It is inevitable, of course, that there are many poems which arise from the circumstances and personal tribulations of these war years, but these deal with emotions which are always part of our human heritage and which are only given a new poignancy and urgency by war. If Miss Robinson finds little that is new to say, she says it, nevertheless, with competence and musically, but her work is, on the whole, slight and without that arresting quality which the dust cover attributes to it. We do not believe that unfounded praise confers the least benefit upon its object and we prefer to say of Miss Robinson's work that it has an easy mastery of the techniques of poetry, is sincere and musical, but remains, as its talented authoress probably knows, verse.

The invasion by our American cousins this time, and because of the times, perhaps, is considerable. *The Bright Plain* by Charles Edward Eaton (University of North Carolina Press) issued by Oxford University Press at 12s., is another immigrant which speaks with the rhythm and urgent intonations of a more spacious land. That some of the poems included would not survive the experiment of writing them out in prose form, is obvious, but this unrealised blemish does not condemn the book which is full of vigorous phrasing and has something to say. The difficulty in these days of writing a criticism of any work from the standpoint of true poetry is too obvious to need stressing, but it cannot be said too often that a thing may be interesting, arresting, and what you will, but that if it is not poetry it should not be written as

such. It will do just as well attired in prose and will not, thus, confuse an already sufficiently obfuscated issue. Verse, we would define as something between these two forms of human expression, partaking more of the poetic character in its music and rhythm, but lacking the deep inspirational force of the real thing. But so much that reaches us to-day, attired in all the outward trappings of poetry, is not even verse when analysed. That it has no poetic fire is obvious at once, but it is not so plain that a tenuous rhythm, barely sufficient for good prose, is all that justifies its claim to be called verse.

But to return to *The Bright Plain*, which prompted these reflections, we should be sorry to do any injustice and to give the impression that there was no more to be said for this volume. It is the worst feature of hobby-horses that they carry one away out of sight before one is aware. Of this book there can be said many other things. Mr. Eaton is often a poet, as in passages like this :

> The evening eyes of passers by
> Whose morning world blew loose and thin
> Watch largo motions of the sky
> Draw all the height of heavens in.

But he does not care always to be one, as when he says in another place :

> This is an American morning.
> Sky is clear and the sweet air tastes like melon ;
> The horizon is strung with racing birds,
> Sun is a benediction upon the lands,
> And breath is a prayer for a long, mild day.

Still, an interesting volume, where the poet is to be discovered singing when he forgets the novel freedoms and extravagances which have a brief and dubious respectability and which survive, not through the love of the multitude, but by the lawlessness of the few.

That ends the contribution from the other three-quarters of the English-speaking world and, on the whole, it was well worth the trouble and expense of a long and hazardous journey among the U-boats. It was an encouragement to observe that traditional forms are still loved and respected in a hemisphere which is not remarkable for its enslavement to traditions generally. There is something more in them, then, than habit, something integral which the human ear loves and cannot do without however it may indulge in sprung rhythm, syncopations, or no rhythm at all in its aggressive and rebellious moments.

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The Fortune Press send us two volumes, the first, *No Crown for Laughter* by Maurice Lindsay (6s.), who is described as a young Scottish poet and critic. We were, accordingly, interested to read a sonnet rather surprisingly rhymed, with three quatrains and a rhymed couplet to top up with, called "The Critic," which scarifies this gentleman in no uncertain manner and, finally, drowns him in a ceaseless tide (presumably of modern poetry) which, unlike most tides, always rises. One can imagine no more unpleasant death, but the critic is safe enough even though his efforts to stem this flood are as unsuccessful as Canute's. The battle, however, is the thing and, as one critic to another, we would, before going any further, take issue with Mr. Lindsay on one or two matters. Will he tell us what are "bagpipe trousers" and how their wearer managed to carry under his arm a "leering gun" the image of his father ? These are not matters which we have observed from "tradition's pathways," where we critics are supposed to be enrutted, and we are visited by some curiosity.

It is fair to say that the book is not full of this sort of thing and we do not seek to give that impression. But it is just to say that the general tone is often bitter and that the book deals with the darker aspects of life as though these predominated.

I could be fifty times as foul a whore
As any girl whose money is to please ;
As bleak a beggar at the cringing door
As any pedlar haughty housewife sees.

You will perceive that even doors cringe and beggars and pedlars are in some confusion. Or take this, of a condemned murderer :

As he walked out to keep his assignation (with a rope)
The parson yapped at his nervous heels
Something of love and Christian resignation :
His prayers oozed and wriggled like escaping eels.

These are topics which seem to us to be as idle as purposeless profanity and the fact that the writing is so good only makes it worse. There is a sort of bravado about it which is enough excuse for any critic to be harsh. The emotion in such things never seems even remotely real ; it is, of course, quite superficial. Not so, however, is it in the following, extracted from "Elegy for a Young Airman" :

Make no memorial for this lover
Bread limply broken, wine unimpassioned,
Nor pity the earth his weeping mother
Out of whose womb his death was fashioned :

Out of whose eyes disaster bred,
From whose weak breasts betrayal ran :
See through each orifice of blood,
Marked with a cross, the fallen man.

This is poetry, of course, marred perhaps, but deliberately, by the last two lines. It seems to us sometimes that our young poets shy away from beauty as from some fatal weakness, and if so be they reveal any, they must make some loud, rude noise to cover the lapse.

Mr. Lindsay may be sure of one thing. We shall never, in his own phrase, "hurl new poets' singing to his (the critic's) feet." Our feet are never scornful, but they itch for aggression sometimes, although never when there is any singing about. He may take our word for it that he can sing and believe us when we say that only when he does is he worth reading. In "The Wreck of the Johanna Thorden," "Kilkerran Bay" and many others he sings with a sure note. Let us conclude with an extract from the latter :

Twice every day, before my eyes
Kilkerran's arms are opened wide :
In surges the green sea of grief
Around my heart's bewildered tide.

The second book from the Fortune Press is *Roadways of the Heart* by Padraig O'Horan. Here is no impatient bitterness or revolt. Mr. O'Horan takes his world as he finds it and endeavours to endear its little ways and graces to us with his music. Thus we are not made loquacious with indignation, but soothed and refreshed by a gentle twanging of his lyre which, though it stirs no anger, yet stirs no wonder either. "An Experiment with Time" is a fair sample of the book's contents :

How slow, interminably slow !
The moments moving one by one
That endless hour when you were gone.

Then I held you in my arms,
And lo, the slow unwinding hour
A moment was on flying feet.

O mystery of love and time
That one brief hour so strange should bring
And endlessness or flash of wing.

This cannot be dismissed as of no account. Its slightness, even the fact that it has been said before in other words, are less to the point than the tender sincerity of every word and the easy certainty of self-expression which it shows. Mr. O'Horan is not, however, always so tuneful and his work generally needs to be deepened and strengthened.

An interesting book came next, *Person, Place and Thing* by Karl J. Shapiro (Secker and Warburg, 6s.). An American soldier, his book should, perhaps, be among the invaders earlier dealt with in this article, but it was published in this country as a corrected edition and so perhaps we may leave it where it is. Mr. Shapiro writes in a modern idiom in traditional forms. The modernity is not a matter of incoherence however, but of sharp, clear meanings, which is certainly more modern than obscurities that recall the dawn of speech. We have nothing but praise for modernity which advances even when it shocks slightly by unpoeticisms. Of a flower he says :

I catch in the wind and loose my scent for bees
That sack my throat for kisses and suck love.

which exemplifies a sufficiently modern insistence on his rights. The quoted reviews of earlier work, given on the dust cover are, we think, over partial. There is power in Mr. Shapiro, certainly, but there is flatness also, and his good things are not so common as you might suppose from these extracts. Also he is not always easy to read, although he can be a master of lucidity when he wants to be satirical. "Elegy for Two Banjos" is a good example of this vein :

Haul up the flag you mourners,
Not half-mast but all the way ;
The funeral is done and disbanded ;
The devil's had the final say.

O mistress and wife too pensive,
Pall-bearers and priestly men,
Put your black clothes in the attic
And get up on your feet again.

Death did his job like a scholar,
A most unusual case,
Death did his job like a gentleman,
He barely disturbed the face.

This is only a small sample of a piece of sharp satire enlivened by a malicious wit. We wish the book success, it will certainly find many friends.

A very different matter is *The First Exile* by Robert Farren (Sheed and Ward, 8s. 6d.). This is a saga, developed in a large number of separate but interwoven poems, which deals with the Abbot Colmcille, an early Gaelic Christian.

He foresaw Colmcille
In the wedlock of his father
With his fine-templed mother,
And reserved him in their mating.

He reserved him when she bore him,
When she gave him to the daylight;
He withdrew him in his boyhood
From the courtesies of maidens.

This will serve to give the flavour of this book. There is much of the simple reiterative strength, the simplicity, of the authentic Norse or Gaelic saga and it is very well done. The historical (or legendary) facts have been marshalled in an interesting way and the narrative holds the interest. The author has caught the atmosphere of an earlier and simpler age in a manner for which he is to be congratulated.

And now, three books by Joseph Millward, styled by whom we know not. "The Soldier-Poet of the 20th Century." These are *Ambrosia* (Arabesque Publications, 1s.); *From the Cathedral Cloisters* (Arabesque, 2s. 6d.); and *Poems* (Curnow). Soldier, Mr. Millward may be, but poet, alas, he is not. He has written and published three books, but in none of them can we discover that originality of thought or expression which attends the waving of the wand which we look for so assiduously. Nor is this author to be commended for technical perfections. His rhythm and construction are not as finished as they should be for the kind of work which he essays to write.

To encounter, in these days, a volume which nowhere seeks an adventitious aid of any sort from words, saving their sense, and which, by an unerring preference, selects the simple and the unremarkable among them as most fitting for use, is the refreshing experience which befell us when we took up *Cross and Shrine* by Mary Winter Were (Sands, 4s. 6d.). Oratory and eloquence, the choosing of forceful and near-meaningful words, are as common in the world of poetry as in the world of affairs and for much the same reason—to dazzle and mislead, offering shadow for substance with an assault upon the ear which, all too often, misleads and beguiles the superficial. Words are, of course, a tool of the trade and, as such, should be used deftly, but we believe that in themselves they should be as self-effacing as is consistent with their role of gathering rhythm and sense into that compelling music which we are here supposed to review. Mrs. Were is of our way of thought. Throughout her book she remains uninfluenced by any other quality in words than their fitness for the place in which she puts them, the place where they will most musically and most simply express what is in her to say. Of this unconscious craft Mrs. Were is a mistress, showing never a flaw in her constructions, which give an impression of that graceful ease of second nature, which disturbs or thwarts her thought not at all. Thus it is that in nearly all the poems given here, there is some touch, some nuance, born of this simplicity of phrasing which delights us by its seeming inevitability. These things come to her by the waving of the wand, not by the fevered cerebrations of the struggling mind.

So much for the outward character of this volume. We dealt with this first since it is our firm opinion that hers is the only possible approach to true poetry. The question of how far towards the heights she has progressed is less easy to establish. There is a grace of bearing in this climber which has a conquering air and yet it seems to us that Mrs. Were is not always concerned to plant her flag on the pinnacle, but is often content to meander, always gracefully, where the air is a little insipid. It may, of course, be said of nearly every poet that the heights have only been reached now and again by some inspired flight, and that there must necessarily be some heavy going in between, but there is verse in this book which attempts too little and achieves no more than it attempts. If there is nothing which could be called heavy going and, indeed, there is not, there is much charming peregrination which reads very much like

Austin Dobson in its unstudied and unambitious charm. A delicate little poem "Tapestries" is of this sort. Slight in texture, it has the excellence, not of an ageless arras, but of petit-point. But in "Transition" we get a deeper note :

> And how should man, flesh-prisoned, bound to earth
> By three-dimensioned path, attain the stars ?
> How shall he dream the glory of his birth
> That day when Life shall burst his prison bars ?

And in "Reunion" there is a touch of real emotion in these lines about falling asleep in a chair in front of the fire :

> . . . . . I take my flight
> Out through the shadow, out, out into the night,
> The deep, broad night encompassing the skies
> With filaments of silver, where full of eyes
> The heavens swing, a galaxy of light.
>
> Gone is the close-shut room ; the lingering fire
> Holds for me now no comfort, though the heat
> Glows kindly on my body in its chair.
> My spirit wings, in fullness of desire
> Up through the starry aisles my love to meet,
> And I am free of earth—and earth's despair.

The perfection of diction, intensified by its very simplicity, is Mrs. Were at her best, and exemplifies the power which she has by virtue of her deftness with words, of raising the commonplace things of life to a new significance and an undeniable beauty.

Music both inspired and pervaded the next book to reach us. Called *Chichester Concert* and by Martin Armstrong, it is published by Cambridge University Press at 1s., and is a somewhat freely written ode indited after a pianoforte recital of Beethoven's Sonata (Opus 109) in Chichester Cathedral. Here again is no aestheticism. The aged stone of the Cathedral seems to have blended with the ageless unsubstantiality of this immortal music to inspire a poem somewhat more austere than Beethoven, in fact more akin to the unadorned beauty of the fane, although the author finds its beauty less than the inspiration which built it :

> The vision into stone debased
> Stands upon the shores of death :
> Breathed on by a Promethean breath
> The stone is to the vision raised.

But of the music he has no doubt of immortality :

> This is the method of music. So men have built
> Perpetual palaces, not of the silt
> Of earth's anatomy but of wave on wave
> Of unsubstantial sound . . . . .

This is a fine poem. The double theme has been subtly interwoven in a strong pattern of its own, both austere and satisfying :

> Spirit and flesh have met together,
> Reason and dream kiss one another ;
> And lo, the kiss has kindled the eyes of reason
> And draped the viewless dream in an earthly dress.
> Then guard this wisdom from the treason
> Of words that cripple and compress
> And twist it into foolishness.

Desert Warrior by Patrick Hore-Ruthven (John Murray, 3s.) convinced us at once, both by its sincerity and its quality, that we had found something out of the ordinary in the run of soldier poets. The author is moved by many things that have nothing to do with war, but by none is he driven to the unnecessary word or line, or to hyperbole or flourish of any kind. Taut, concise, with a sort of staccato smoothness, he says his say, revealing unexpected thought angles and new, unsuspected beauties with the true ease of a true poet. Here is a small gem from his collection, called "Realities":

O love, which for a single hour did move
My spirit to a plane surpassing heaven
And there released it daringly to rove,
Let not the cruel descent be too uneven.

As down it falls each moment nearer brings
The ring of battles and the din of wars,
Braced yet again for jar of earthly things,
Once carried on the carpet of the stars.

This gifted young man died of wounds received in long-range desert duty. We may mourn him. Was the haunting poem "In Palestine" written prophetically? Whether or no, it has a simple beauty which strikes straight and true to the depth of the heart. Here it is:

Where does my lover lie?
Under what blinding sky
Dead, or prepared to die?
Where lies my lover?

Does the soul swiftly fly,
Soaring exultantly?
Or like a butterfly
Hesitant hover?

Or as the peregrine
Stoops to the hardly seen
Prey, strikes the unforeseen
Death of my lover?

What stone in Palestine
Pillows what once was mine?
Bloody now lies the fine
Head of my lover

And does the spark divine
In his black eyes still shine
Or has the spirit fine
Bravely passed over?

Would that my breast could hold
That which now lies so cold;
God! Give me back the bold
Head of my lover!

What is poetry? It is rather late in the day to ask such a question and there are so many views upon it that the query seems almost rhetorical. There is, of course, an answer, and we take immediate issue with Mr. G. D. Martineau who, in a foreword to his book *Rhyme the Rudder* (British Authors' Press) goes out of his way to describe the contents as verse and denies them poetic quality. We do not agree. The lightness of his touch does not confine him to the surface—at all events of our mind. In reading we were at once impressed by the fact that humour has a no more depressant effect upon verse than the other emotions to which our natures are subject. We wish we had space for copious quotation of these reprints from *Punch* and *The Field*. There is, however, too much to choose from and we should be wiser to refrain from giving the almost inevitable impression that our extract was a picked poem. But "Tea in Kensington," a witty piece celebrating the quiet courage of the ordinary Kensington resident under blitz bombardment, sustained only by cups of tea, is too good to deny quotation of at least the last two stanzas:

Such valour takes no star-bound wing
To lay the murderer low,

Nor rides to rescue—ring-a-ring—
Towards the crackling glow.
Corps, crest, or credit have they none,
And epics, wrought from set of sun
To dawn's All Clear in Kensington,
Only the tea-cups know.

Unfathomed springs of evil thought
Fed Prussia's bursting pride,
Nor shall we guess what moment brought
The Turning of the tide :
But private histories, known to none,
May have it that the heathen Hun
Found cups of tea in Kensington
Too fierce a flood to ride.

We do not pretend this is better than the rest, it is an example of the quality spread evenly through the volume. We recognise the humour, but it does not, for us, obscure the poetry which is there and everywhere and none the worse for the association.

And last, but assuredly not least, a most unusual volume, *Castle in Spain* by Walter Brooks Drayton Henderson (Yale University Press, $2.00 ; London : Oxford University Press). This is, of course, an invader from America and should have come to hand in time for the main body already reviewed ; but what a straggler it is. The author died in 1939, in his early fifties, and the volume which we are reviewing was written, for the most part, in 1933 whilst he was on a voyage to Spain. It is singular, we think, that work of such distinction should have languished for more than ten years in the obscurity of manuscript, but we rejoice that what is, for him, posterity, should have redeemed it now.

There is a passionate sincerity of communication here which, at times, and in the most natural manner possible, ignores the rules of rhythm ; yet never so as to jar. It appears sometimes almost as if the poem had been left with a rough note of how it was to be completed at some more leisured moment. Be that as it may, the work bears the stamp of a fine original mind whose usage of words is unconscious, and therefore simple, leaving an idelible impression of emotional depth which owes nothing to mere literary endeavour. A devotional poem of great strength called "Wayside Shrine" attracted us. Let us quote the last stanza, which indicates Christ's humility in rejecting pomp for his entry into Jerusalem :

No ! He chose and rode an ass
To Jerusalem, his goal,
Through the people's shouting mass
Followed by her foal.
And the spacious ears perceived
From the drawing of his breath
That in nought was he deceived
By their shouting, or their triumph ;
For the triumph he was winning
Was but at its first beginning—
Was the triumph, of Calvary, over death.

The book is not primarily, nor even much, concerned with sacred themes. It is a record of a journey and its provision is as varied as one would expect of a sensitive mind at large in a strange and colourful land. Here is a pen picture of a paint picture

of Horta (from the sea) seen in a Spanish gallery :

Islands, or great with mountains from the sea
Purple with shadows and the still clouds sleeping,
Or sandy spits with neither shade nor greenery
Have all alike a term. The flood tides sweeping
With rain of blowing foam, or gentle, creeping
Upon their shelly marge deny it not to be,
But admit rather ; each with other keepihg
The singing secret of their dual empery.

This is a piece of perfectly traditional poetry, yet as individual and satisfying as original quality can make it. There was some special contiguity and understanding between Mr. Henderson and the inanimate world, a distinctive trait which, while making him what the world calls lonely, yet placed him upon terms of special intimacy with a larger universe. This, for him, wore none of that air of indifference which, even in its most beautiful manifestations, seems to say to ordinary men—this feast is not spread for you, you do not exist for us because your heart is untrue. For him there was no such exclusion. He was a part of nature and it responded by giving him an awareness and an insight which is rare indeed.

We regret the printer's error in our last issue whereby Mr. Heath Stubb's poem "The Heart's Forest" was stated to be "from Plutarch." This should have read "from Petrarch" and should have applied only to the first poem in this sequence.

* * * *

Roman Vergil by W. F. Jackson Knight (Faber) is written with immense learning and immense enthusiasm, but I fear that it has not much to offer the lover of poetry as distinct from the classical scholar. The chapter headings show the scope of the book, "The World before Vergil, and Vergil's World," "Vergil's Life and Work," "Tradition and Poetry," "Form and Reality," "Language, Verse and Style," "Poetry and Manuscripts," "Vergil and After." Each of these sections is very fully covered, but the ordinary reader will get very little more from the book than from the preface to Mackail's well-known edition of the poet.

A large part of the book is devoted to analysing Vergil's methods of thought and work and the author rightly emphasises the great use which Vergil made of the Greek and earlier Latin poets. This, as he points out, does not in any way detract from Vergil's originality, since his memories of the work of his predecessors, like his own memories of things seen and experienced, are filtered and worked up by the subconscious mind into something wholly new and original. To quote Mr. Jackson Knight's own words :

> "The poet's rhythm puts us into a mood in which our conscious mind has access to our unconscious. There is something that we do not know happening. The ancient rhythms, lost to sight amid the orchestral complexities of the great masters, are there, awaking a response in us. Then the poet of the old lineage makes all things new. He has found new rhythms, new tones. The spirit's eyes and ears are open, and there is access to the unconscious soul of truth in us. There the new rhythm enters and is built on to the old. We, too, are made new. We are made to hear, and so to see."

Unfortunately, Mr. Jackson Knight sadly over-elaborates his ideas. He repeats them again and again in different forms and his book is stuffed with references and cross references. Moreover, in his anxiety never to speak without justification, he is capable of such sentences as the following description of Vergil's last sickness :

"At Megara he suddenly suffered an attack of illness, perhaps connected with the habitual cause of his weak health, whatever that may have been."

Then he is capable of irritating, obscure sentences like the following:

"Most of all, perhaps, Homer made Vergil; unless nothing could, if all did not";

or:

"Perhaps it was a new and wrong kind of just this emulation that Agrippa blamed Vergil for inventing."

The lover of poetry who may wish to enlist the help of modern scholarship in obtaining a better understanding of Vergil must regret that Mr. Jackson Knight has not distilled his immense learning and enthusiasm into a more lucid and attractive form, for there is no doubt that he himself has a unique knowledge and understanding of the subject. Perhaps one day he will consider our weakness, throw away all his reference books, and write something for the ordinary man.

If observation in general were more factual and accurate little need would arise for repudiating the widely-held fallacy that poetry-making is peculiarly a womanish occupation. There are women-poets, of course, whose essentially feminine and delicate sensibilities find in poetry and verse-making their most intimate and satisfactory expression, and a recent anthology, *Poems by Contemporary Women* (Hutchison), illustrates this fairly comprehensively.

Mr. P. H. B. Lyon's exciting and adequate foreword is just what was expected from the author of so stimulating an enthusiasm as *The Discovery of Poetry*. The dignified format and general appearance of this volume is a worthy example of the work which the house of Hutchinson is doing for contemporary poetry. It contains some of the well-known names and many of the less-well-known—for this compilation is, in the words of its two editors, an attempt to break new ground.

Poetry Society members will need no introduction to the excellent work of Lady Margaret Sackville, nor to such genuine poets as Sylvia Lynd, Ruth Pitter, Margaret Stanley-Wrench, V. Sackville West, and the veteran Margaret L. Woods. Ada Jackson, first winner of The Poetry Society' Greenwood Prize, is here—represented by four poignant lyrics, which give a good taste of her individual quality, but where is Lilian Bowes-Lyon and Dorothy Sayers and Sarojini Naidu, and others to whom may justly be applied the word "poet" and not merely the belittling and limited word "poetess"—the use of which we have always deprecated? But we do not doubt the editors can supply adequate reasons for these omissions, the most notable of which, perhaps, is Miss Edith Sitwell, whose latest venture in book-making, *Planet and Glow-worm*, has just been issued by Messrs. Macmillan, the impeccable taste of whose book-production is, happily, so well known. This might well be, as Miss Sitwell claims, "a book for the sleepless," but, like her *Poet's Notebook*, it is certainly not a book for the million, but rather a book for the bookish or, at any rate, for the "middle-class" intellectual. Miss Sitwell's brilliance, no less than her wilfulness and caprice, is everywhere evident in these arbitrary pages of selections which range from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries down to the present day. Miss Sitwell's repetitive and purposeful presentation of her brother Sacheverell's rhythmical qualities will annoy some readers, while delighting others. For ourselves, we would have preferred instead some of Miss Sitwell's own more necromantic and sleep-making legerdemain. And it was a singular omission (in a collection which includes a most appropriate and pertinent extract from the writings of Gertrude Stein) to have missed that classically narcotic passage to be found in James Joyce's "Anna Livia Plurabelle." But this does not mean that we are not grateful to Miss Sitwell for an admirable, though limited, book, which is never dull or commonplace.

Although hitherto we had not taken any too seriously Mr. D. B. Wyndham Lewis's playful, if spirited, incursions into book-making, his *Villon* successor *Ronsard* (Sheed and Ward, 12s. 6d.), a handsome and dignified volume which does credit to its publishers, we feel that this may well be the beginning of a new phase in his literary career. To the reader whose knowledge of Ronsard is limited to one or two of the most familiar poems, *viz.* "Mignonne, allons voir si la rose" and "Quand vous serez bien vieille, au soir, a la chandelle," this book affords an easy and interesting introduction. That is not to say that we feel the literary style is either beyond improvement or fully worthy of the subject. By way of illustrating our discontent, we confess that our faith is rather shaken by a passage on page 71, in which Rabelais is described as "the George Bernard Shaw of his time (barring a slight addiction to meat, women, wine, scholarship and frivolity)"! If only Mr. Lewis would curb his propensity for a sharp brilliance at the expense of his convictions (see page 55, last para.). But underneath much of this superficial brilliance and phrase-making the shrewd observer will already detect the change of heart wrought in Mr. Lewis by this study. In his own words "the mental health and vigour of Ronsard is tonic." And no wonder, for was not he a son of the Renaissance, that resurgent period which moved Erasmus to exclaim, as Mr. Lewis so aptly quotes at the beginning of his book, "Immortal God! what a world I see dawning! Why am I not young again?" which many of us are inclined to echo in these present times.

We have already dealt recently with John Pudney's *South of Forty* and have now another new book by this prolific writer, *Ten Summers* (Lane, 7s. 6d.), which is for the most part a winnowing from earlier and later poems, with a sprinkling of hitherto unpublished poems. The journalese quality of these verses is once and again redeemed by such good poems as (say) "Song of a Million Spring Evenings," "Elegy for Tom Roding," "Missing," "For Johnny," and "The Blind." We are inclined to believe that the writer of these poems will go far if he waits upon his seldom inspiration and beware of a rather too facile technique. This kind of "slight" verse has its legitimate use and function.

A Garland of Song (British Authors' Press, 5s.), Edith M. Fry's very mixed anthology, is graced by a most attractive title, but fails to live up to it. The choice has been too random, too ill-assorted, and dare we add pedestrian, in spite of such excellent contributions as those by Ruth Pitter, V. Sackville-West, Lady Margaret Sackville, Herbert Palmer, Lord Dunsany, Ernest Rhys, Sarojini Naidu, Monk Gibbon, Terence Heywood and Richard Church, which coruscate too brilliantly in an otherwise dull girdle. There is a non-alphabetical list of contents, but no alphabetical index to poems or contributors, and apparently no particular design or order in this unbalanced miscellany, and the colonial contributions might have been extended to more adequately justify the title.

Poetry and Life, a new anthology of English Catholic poetry compiled by F. J. Sheed (Sheed and Ward, 7s. 6d.), is a cultured and distinctive volume of outstanding quality in these slip-shod times. Here is poetry indeed, where every page reveals the discriminating touch of balance and refinement. This is a beautiful production worthy of the compiler's aim, which is to illustrate through fine poetry universal life from the Catholic viewpoint. There is a very direct and admirable preface to the book for the non-reader of poetry. Wilde is represented by "E Tenebris," but the more transcendental sonnets of Lord Alfred Douglas are conspicuous by their absence. We rejoice at the opportunity of again reading Langland's "Afar on the Floodways," which might give pointers to some modern poets and is a fine illustration o the derivations of English poetry.

Mr. Guy Boas's *A Book of Light Verse* (Macmillan, 7s. 6d.) is a well-turned-out if rather ambitious project. To those who consider that the whole point and charm of the humorous in life and in poetry lies in its occasional nature, the separation, isolation and emphasis of it in such a collection will seem at once an absurd and humourless undertaking : at the same time, any book that relieves our needs in these straitened days is acceptable ; and Mr. Boas's labours shew a catholic and comprehensive choice which ranges from Chaucer to A. P. Herbert ! We can't help regretting, however, an excellent opportunity missed, for surely here, *par excellence*, should be the final resting-place of Messrs. Auden and Co. Auden's ominous interest in "light verse" was apparent as early as 1935 and with his editing of *The Oxford Book* in 1937 he became a light-verse specialist or expert. The marked absence of the so-called "modernist" school was probably intentional. Do they actually write lightly ? We welcome *anywhere* the re-appearance of Harvey "Ducks," but surely this poem, like Bunyan's "The Cloud and the Bird," is *something more* than merely "light" ! As well describe *Pickwick Papers* as a "light" novel. The majority of the selections, however, are well chosen, and it is a delight to find within the covers of a single volume a variety so wide as to include Shakespeare, Walter Savage Landor, Thos. Moore, John Gay, W. S. Gilbert and Lewis Carroll.

The Desk Drawer Anthology (Hutchinson, 8s. 6d.) is really "an anthology that is different," no mere lazy, timid re-assembly of familiar poems. It is everyman's collection, favourite poems dug out of drawers and wallets in response to an American radio request by Alexander Woollcott—400 selected by Alice Roosevelt Longworth and Theodore Roosevelt from 40,000 cherished favourites sent in. It is an audacious American achievement—an omnious anthology of the general public. Neither the BBC nor any English illuminati would have dared to sponsor such a selection : it is alien to the taste and conception of the eclectic young men, who have dubbed it "an orgy of sentimentalism," and the "half men with their dirty songs and dreary," scorn its simplicity, decency and universality. The poetry pundits of the BBC would lose their jobs rather than broadcast the two most widely-selected items, "Prayer for a Very New Angel" and "A Prayer Found in Chester Cathedral" : they would rather mumble incoherencies than offer what the public need and like—the vitality, humanity, warm-hearted, merry, musical, comforting, consoling favourites of these individual anthologists, which show that poetry "has formed a common if unrecognised brotherhood among people of the most diverse lives and occupations." And that is its fundamental office, not the creation of a hieretic intolerant clique.

The scope of *England,* an anthology compiled by a Committee of the English Association (Macmillan, 7s. 6d.), is admirable, but is not very effectively developed. It purports "to give a faithful picture of the outward aspect and inner life of our country and her people in works selected from the writings of the English poets of every period in our literature." But it is not the comprehensive English epic The Poetry Society proposed to compile under the direction of the late Lord Rennell. It presents a patchy "Countryside" and "Town" not nearly as complete and homogenous and satisfying as Rostrevor Hamilton's recent *Landmarks,* the "Town" is a bit of Oxford and Cambridge, Bath and Brighton, and then all incidental, unplanned London. The other groups, art, sport, war, humour, character, reflection, and even more partially, tritely and pedantically illustrated. Something has gone wrong with a noble scheme. Perhaps too many cooks.

THE POETRY REVIEW is a splendid magazine, *with criticism vital and to the point :* **VERA BAX (Mrs. Clifford Bax).**

SONG TO SPRING

THESE eyes foresee another spring,
This heart reveals immortal fire,
And thoughts arise past numbering
In sweet desire.

The gallant leaves of youth are blown
Upon the wind of care and stress,
And love to manhood fully grown
Is loveliness.

O Time is short—and Time is long,
Eternity belongs to love;
The silver accents of a song
Are heard above.

From winter's sleep the days unfold,
Newborn to laughter and to strife;
A flame is seen to tip with gold
The green of life.

With vibrant sound the voice returns
That once was silent with the years;
The joy within my bosom burns
Away my tears.

The mists that hid the mountain crest
Are vanished to reveal the sky;
The river purls and seeks to rest
Upon a sigh.

We are together—let it be
Forever, so that we shall trace
The realms of vast Futurity
In fond embrace.

JAMES CRAWFORD MILNE.

EPITAPH FOR AN AIRMAN

I LIKE to think your journey was not far,
That death came to you swiftly, in full flight,
And merged you, laughing, in the secret night,
You, who were half a star.
I like to think that you were not afraid
But went to earth unflinching; you, who knew
So well the ways of courage, you who flew
To spread your pinions. Was it that you prayed
In those last moments for God's helping hand,
You, who were all sufficient?
You, so young,
Have written there a poem to be sung
By other voices in that other Land.

MARY MORE.

POETRY, TYPOGRAPHY AND PROSE

The question of form in poetry is dealt with in more than one place in the March-April issue of THE POETRY REVIEW, and your readers are doubtlessly more than familiar with a masterly statement of the case for formalism recently published by Lord Alfred Douglas. No one is better qualified to state that case. He is critic of fearless integrity and a poet who has followed the canons of his art as he has expounded them with the highest skill and the most unswerving devotion. It is therefore with some diffidence that I venture to suggest that the whole discussion of this matter has been obscured by misunderstanding about terminology. The word "poetry" is used as if it were the equivalent of "verse" or at any rate of "good verse."

Now I submit that when we say a thing is "poetry" we should mean nothing other than that it is verbal expression that has poetic quality. The nature of this poetic quality has never been satisfactorily defined and perhaps it is indefinable. An analogy may, hoever, give some slight assistance. Artistic quality is rarely claimed for an architect's plans; but there is a fairly general concensus of opinion that the Mona Lisa has this quality. We have a feeling that poetic quality and artistic quality have something in common. Perhaps this is because they are both related to beauty. But this only confronts us with the task of defining "beauty."

When we use the word "verse" we should, I submit, mean verbal expression in metre or rime or both. Shortly, when we say a thing is "poetry" we are talking about its quality, and when we say it is "verse" we are talking about its form.

If this position be provisionally adopted it will be readily conceded that much verse does not aspire to the quality of poetry—comic rimes and the like. Further, it must be remembered that when word of mouth was the usual medium of communication quite mundane historical, scientific and didactic compositions employed metre and rime (together with alliteration) for the utilitarian reason that they were thereby rendered easy to commit to memory.

It may also be conceded (though not so readily) that verbal expression not in verse may be poetry. We use the term "poetic prose" without any feeling of contradiction. Some passages from Walter Pater are frequently, and I think quite properly, so described. One of T. S. Eliot's *Collected Poems* is printed in prose.

Looked at in this light the question of formalism in poetry becomes the question as to the extent to which certain literary devices, notably metre and rime, are proper to the adequate expression of any given poetic sentiment. Formalism is a question of degree and the hard and fast line between prose and verse becomes blurred.

It is legitimate to argue (though I would not agree) that very formal arrangements of metre and rime are necessary to the expression of all highly poetic ideas. It is not, I maintain, justifiable to condemn informal verbal expression as "not poetry" just because it is informal or deviates from classical forms. The critic should be able to demonstrate the poetic quality or otherwise of a composition by considerations independent of form.

In his *Principles of Poetry* Lord Alfred Douglas likens a poet who makes use of even such irregularities as are common in admittedly great poetry to one who says "I always play a few false notes in a Chopin Etude, I do it on purpose to produce a certain effect." The true analogy with such an idiot-musician would be a poetry reader who said "I always alter the author's words here and there, etc." Modern composers do in fact make deviations from accepted forms closely comparable with those made by modern poets. In considering all such deviations we must not forget that the cultivated reader or listener can be expected to have the accepted form at the

back of his mind. The deviation, therefore, provides that element of surprise which is one of the elements of both poetry and music.

In placing these considerations before your readers I have no desire to pour oil on troubled waters or to introduce soothing syrup in a controversy which tends to become acrimonious. If men hotly dispute a question, even if they quarrel or become bad-tempered about it, they at least show that they consider the matter important. But to-day the formalists and the anti-formal heretics (as Lord Alfred calls them) both taken together are an insignificant band among an increasing neo-barbarism that, like Gallio, cares for none of these things. I only plead that in this situation, although controversy and even acute controversy, is legitimate, either side should stop short of anathemising the other.

Bricket Wood, Herts. ALEC CRAIG.

THE DISCIPLINE OF RHYME

The recent annotated reading by Canon Adam Fox of unrhymed poetry has inspired me, not, of course, in any spirit of contradiction, to offer you some observations on the same matter. Canon Fox was concerned to prove that poetry could be, and had been, written without submission to the tyranny of rhyme and, with most of the examples which he read to us, he established his case. I did not think he did so, however, with his reading from Robert Bridges, and it was that apparent failure which began my speculations upon the subject and founded the conclusions at which I have arrived.

Shakespeare and Milton, so exceptional in their genius, are not, I think, apt for the support of any argument of the sort which Canon Fox put forward. You might as well prove the rule by its exceptions which, in spite of the proverb, is scarcely practicable. These two were so richly endowed as to appear to be on a higher plane than any English poets either before or since, and that richness made it of small moment to either, whether their task were easy or hard. For them I should suppose that the ignoring of rhyme affected not at all an utterance so abundantly inspired. Added facility would certainly not defeat them.

But facility will always defeat lesser men. One sees it on every hand. The stream, flowing free and unhampered, is shallow and uninteresting. No rainbows, no delirious eddies, decorate its course and, paradoxically enough, the sheer ease of expression finds little to say. Not all of us can "lisp in numbers." The stream must be dammed and hampered before it deepens, must be fretted with obstacles before it can sing and must burst a fetter or two before it can fling a rainbow-lit spray.

Rhyme, therefore, is no tyranny, but a benevolent discipline, which adds, not only "tinkling music" as its detractors say, but a depth which neither Shakespeare nor Milton needed, but which the others do and will until some new giants appear.

This question of simplification of difficulty is a very interesting one. It is significant that in languages where rhyming is easy you do not find as much great poetry as in those where it is difficult. It is said that where there is a decimal system of coinage it takes the tradesman in general longer to make out his bill than with us. It is now being argued by those to whom it is recommended that basic English will defeat itself for the same reason, viz., that it abrogates the necessity for an intellectual exertion which sharpens the wit in proportion to the difficulty and that, therefore, the over-simplified part will prove, in time, as difficult to acquire, if not more so, than the rich, illogical and capricious whole.

Into this error has fallen what is known as the modern school of poetry. One does not know, of course, with certainty that all their flatness and prosiness is due to

this cause, but it is more than probable that in their impatience with the bounds needful to the stream which can irrigate and make fertile the imaginations of men, they have run to waste and insignificance. There is always this lure of the royal road and the bloodless victory. I remember the advertisements for French without Tears, How to Play the Piano in Ten Lessons, and a host of others. I wonder how many linguists and how many Paderewskis resulted. Certainly no more than the number of great poets which the modern school has produced, about which, perhaps, it is only necessary to observe that there is nothing modern about it but its hardihood and the fact that it has neither rule nor curriculum.

Go the hard way. This is the age of opportunism and the short view or, perhaps I should say, we have not outgrown that age. Only by the stress and sweat of difficulty, fairly met and overcome, can any man or any poet prosper. What Shakespeare did so well we cannot emulate, although we may approach by the discipline and fasting of tyrannous rhyme to form part of his less immortal chorus.

Twickenham, May 6th. H. W. HARDING.

A MAJOR LUMINARY

I was interested to read A. V. Bowen's notes on Herbert Palmer. I had never heard of the latter until a year ago, when he judged the Greenwood Premium Competition, and although I detected an astute critic beneath the review of this adjudication, I was not impressed with his use of similes of the turf or the National Sporting Club whilst discussing the various spiritual and mysterious outpourings of our brotherhood. Then in a poetry contemporary, which had recently "gone modern," I read a very disparaging review of a book of verse he had just published. In a few sarcastic lines it was treated as if it were the heavily subsidised first publication of an amateur: its author due to receive the customary punishment appropriate to this act of audacity. But a week ago I chanced to read a poem by him in an anthology and this, followed by A. V. Bowen's timely article, made me see at once that we have a major luminary in our midst.

What a terrible rebuke to the cause of literature that one who can write with such force and colour, with such self-reliance and originality of inference, an associate of the late Laureate and of other prominent poets, can spend a life-time composing and publishing verse which must have failed to reach the knowledge of many (or perhaps most) of those interested in poetry itself! Does it not suggest that there should be set up some publicating force to disseminate choice literature to the channels that require it? Could not a national bureau be instituted after the war which would reward financially a deserving recipient and secure beyond doubt his name and his works to posterity? Can nothing be done to further this? If it cannot, I shall have to agree that your contributor's title "The Last of the Bards" is very apposite. But I would much rather say that I consider that Herbert Palmer ranks high in the list of prophets who keep straight the prow of their crafts, who are oblivious of fashion and will pass on the torch of inextinguishable fire to a line which will stretch out to eternity.

Clifford, Hereford. ARTHUR ROW, F.R.S.A., M.R.S.L.

Apropos the welcome appreciation of the work of Herbert Palmer in the current POETRY REVIEW, I venture to mention that an experience, such as very rarely has occurred to me while reading contemporary verse, has lately given me an inkling that the present age is, after all, not barren of long poems of a greatness comparable with those of Coleridge or Keats, to go no further back in time. I refer to Mr. Herbert Palmer's "The Wolf Minstrel: Caedmon's Book," or "The Ballad of Caedmon's

Dream." This tale in verse made a glorious impression on me, an impression not dulled, but rather heightened, by the fact that I had just read many other poems from Mr. Palmer's volume of collected verse. These were obviously the work of a poet of stature and significance. Numbers of them were moving, and uniquely so, as only poetry written by genius can be. Then this poem gave up its richness. Who forgets the thrilling hour of first discovery of "The Eve of St. Agnes," or "Christabel," or Kilmeny" ? That is no less an authentic hour of discovery because the works in question happen to be smiled on by time and ratified for literary fame by a gradually increasing number of eminent judges. When, however, a poem of the present day has this effect on one, it is not possible to let pass the thought that the public ought to have its notice drawn to such a work.

Quotation may give a glimpse of this heart-stirring magic :

Our monks sing low, with their thoughts confined.
But his spirit rode free as a triumphing wind.

And ending, he loosened the byrnie's hasp
Above the javelin's jewelled clasp.

But all the monks sat silent and scowled.
Deep in the night a mastiff howled.

And the abbess said, "Fie ! gleeman, fie !
This is no place for wild levity.

The glad dawn that smites on the cock-crowing East
Rebukes not the starry night's kneeling priest."

Slowly she spoke it, her soft eyes smiling.
I watched her well from the outer ring.

Her look seemed born of a mind that darkly
Moveth in realms which none may see.

I write as one desirous of returning thanks for a piece of flashing music among the scrapings of many reminiscent of an orchestra forever tuning up. Seriously, this poem ought to be in every anthology of longer English poems. Of its calibre it would be an impertinence to speak except in words of the highest praise.

G.H.Q., Home Forces. ARTHUR W. BALL (Pte.)

PROSE POEMS AND POETIC PROSE

A correspondent has asked "What are prose poems ? should they be classed as poetry or prose ? how do they differ from poetic prose ?" Prose poems are hybrids, neither entirely prose nor entirely verse. As poetry they break most of the rules traditionally adhered to by poets and versifiers. Ever since inspired writers put into words their thoughts on religion, adventure, love or war, and sang them to the accompaniment of the harp or recited them in public, poetry has conformed to certain "shapes." As prose they generally fail because of lack of fluency, owing to the breaking up of phrases into irregular lines not always in accordance with punctuation. They may satisfy a modern need for a more vigorous and less permanent form of verse, taking the place of journalism, shall we say, in prose writing, vividness of picture and aptness of wording being their chief characteristics. They are easier to write than metrical verse, more difficult to memorise, and generally less pleasant to listen to.

Prose poems are a reaction from the pit-pat form of verse formerly given to schoolchildren to learn. (Children love these verses, but that is another story ! Clever-

clever adolescents despise them.) That, however, is no reason why budding poets (who, I think, are the worst offenders) should not take the trouble to study the rules of versification and to discipline themselves to writing down their thoughts, some of them genuine inspirations, no doubt, in form and language all can appreciate. After all, poetry is for pleasure and to be successful, it should please, not only the writers, but the readers. It certainly should not be published unless it is likely to please a fair number of discriminating readers.

There seems a definite place for prose poems as a medium of expression for much subject-matter which could not be so well conveyed in metrical forms of verse. Two of my prose poems which have appeared in THE POETRY REVIEW are called "An Operation" and "Critics." These subjects, or rather the phases that appealed to me, I could not have expressed so well through any other medium.

Further down in the gradation from poetry to prose come the Psalms of David in their present form. In subject-matter of arrangement in verses and division into half-verses, each psalm is a poem; otherwise it might be called a short religious essay expressed in the most suitable language for singing. We come to the conclusion that there are many stages from pure poetry to prose, some of the intermediate forms filling the need for vivid "journalistic" verse, some others, alas! being merely vehicles of strange effusions of certain authors who want to be thought "different."

Maidstone. EDITHA MELBOURNE.

CRITICISM OF CRITICS

Why does not Mr. Nicholas Moore leave his older contemporaries alone when they are not deserving of a young man's censure? He merely creates a distasteful (but I hope, false) impression: that he is a jealous opportunist and unscrupulous modernist racketeer. Moreover, he finds fault with what he doesn't seem to understand. Your reviewer quoted in admiration a couplet from Arnold V. Bowen's *Lyrics of Love and Death,* which might contain a slight defect (or obscurity), but Mr. Moore seeks to chastise him for "Flicker to rest," which is excellent, and for "To move with but the Planet's turn," which is nearly as good. If there is any kind of fault in the couplet it is in the epithet "last," for it implies re-incarnation, as if the man had undergone other cremations.

> Flicker to rest in thy last urn,
> To move but with the Planet's turn.

But Mr. Moore makes no comment on this, though such a doubting Thomas might have been excused for telling us that he didn't believe in material immortality and that Mr. Bowen was in need of a religious tract from the Salvation Army. Reading again the very excellent lyric from which the lines are taken, I am not at all convinced that Mr. Bowen was implying the end of a final stage of re-incarnation. I was not the appreciative reviewer, or I might have quoted other lines—which, in my perverse opinion, are a great deal better, though none more economical. It is quite evident that Mr. Moore had not (at the time) set eyes on Mr. Bowen's book, for he says, "Probably, in fact, Mr. Bowen is not even a good poet." Why attack what you have never read? It is preposterous.

The lines by J. F. Hendry which Mr. Moore, in defiance of the reviewer, thinks "have a perfectly clear meaning" are about as obscure as they could be, though they have evidently been misprinted by Mr. Hendry's publisher.

> Staged is the Park is the immortality
> They have forgotten in the city.

It is the oldest church and Parliament
Most constant lyric and the last lament.

Surely they were intended as :

Staged in the Park is the immortality
They have forgotten in the city.

It is the oldest church and Parliament's
Most constant lyric and the last lament.

But it is the first time we have been told that Westminster Abbey is in a park, and that it is Time's "last lament," though now that I have added *apostrophe s*, "Parliament's most constant lyric" is a very good and apt phrase. Perhaps Mr. Hendry means that Parliament has assembled for the last time on earth and is weeping over the bombing of Westminster Abbey.

St. Albans. HERBERT PALMER.

In the various letters you have published in disagreement with mine of December 5th, there seems to be very little which invalidates anything I then wrote. There are, however, a few minor points I would like to correct, some of which are not strictly to do with the matter in hand, but rather seek to invalidate my argument with implications about my character.

(1) Your critic remarks that I apparently resent a reflection on my "friend," J. F. Hendry. I am not a friend of Mr. Hendry's, and I do not particularly care for his verse ; but that does not alter the fact that it is stupid and uncritical to refer to a couple of his lines with a demonstrably clear meaning as "verbal surrealism." Mr. Hendry's poetry may be bad and surrealism may be bad, but Mr. Hendry's poetry is not surrealist, so why suggest that it is ? Unless you are (*a*) an incompetent critic (*b*) you wish to cast a slur on something you dislike by fair means or foul—which is the only reason I can see for your critic's suggesting that Mr. Hendry is a friend of mine ; it doesn't matter much, but it just doesn't happen to be true.

(2) I am sorry I offended Mr. Bowen by suggesting that he was a young man. He would certainly be a brave man if he were really writing *for antiquity*, but one gathers from his other remarks that it is much more likely he is writing for that large little public, which, so he says, holds his newly-made antiques in such esteem.

(3) Miss Landon's letter is at least literate and reasonable, but she attributes to me many ideas which are not at all implicit in my previous letter ; the words "of a high order" would not be applied by a *responsible* critic as lightly as she seems to think your critic applies them ; and my whole point is that the lines quoted by your critic do not in the least justify the remarks he makes about them : if he had, as Miss Landon suggests, read the books in their entirety, why does he exhibit for those who haven't these lines—and these lines only—which do *not* support his opinion ; a critic is entitled to his opinion, but a reader is also entitled to require that he should produce more basis for it than a few short quotations that in fact give the lie to it. And Miss Landon's remark that "poetry, as distinct from verse, has something of the mystical in it" does not, I'm afraid, convince me that Mr. Bowen's shabby lines are anything but what they seem. She never defines her terms, any more than does your critic. Her only superiority is that at least she does *try* to argue honestly, and does not drag in suggestions about my—quite mythical—friendship with Mr. Hendry or Mr. Bowen's face-saving suggestion that I wish to win acclaim as a disputant, a suggestion which, if true, would obviously take the sting out of the fact that I said his verse was bad. But Mr. Bowen doesn't matter : it is the general principle that

is important. Are we or are we not going to continue to have criticism made meaningless by this kind of opinionated and ill-considered reviewing (improper because the critic never adduces any real reasons for his opinions, useless because the books reviewed are considered on the base of these improper opinions) and, if we are, what hope is there of creating an intelligent public for poetry? If you persuade people—such as Miss Landon—that mediocre work is fit to be designated as work "of a high order," how can you expect them to recognise work that really is of a high order? It will be extremely difficult for them, and the function of criticism should be to make it easier, not more difficult. To do this it must be unprejudiced, careful, and free from unnecessary vagueness: in other words, both honest *and* competent. If it is not, it betrays its function, and indeed destroys any point in its existence at all.

Cambridge, May 3rd, 1944. NICHOLAS MOORE.

The Reviewer writes: Mr. Nicholas Moore returns to the attack with a pessimistic wish to discuss my reason for existing and a new charge that I am mistaken in supposing him to be a friend of Mr. Hendry. He does not appreciate that, in supposing this, I was generous, and upon two grounds. (1) that he had leapt into the breach at the dictate of a worthy emotion and (2) that affection had biassed that critical faculty which he still prefers to mine. We learn now that Mr. Moore's views are untainted by friendship and untinged with partiality. So be it; I am relieved to find that his tenderer emotions have not been affected, but only his aesthetic sense. With that, I, and some others, have already dealt, and I do not now feel drawn to discuss the nature of surrealism with him. He objects to this term as applied to some of Mr. Hendry's work, but he supplies no other. In using it I was studious to avoid the unnecessary wound and wished merely to indicate a condition that defied easy comprehension by the normal person.

But Mr. Moore is angry, not only with me, but with Mr. A. V. Bowen, whom I was uncritical (?) enough to praise. He gibes again at him with the phrase "newly-made antiques" and so reveals the reason for his leap into the aforesaid breach, which I had so considerately ascribed to friendship. It is, of course, his aberrant belief that no new beauty can come out of the clear and simple use of words. Mr. Moore's conception of the new school—a young Titan refusing all bonds or bounds, licensed to outrage every canon and, alas, at times most decencies—is at war with Mr. Bowen's (and mine), which sees it as an obstreperous and rather incoherent infant asking lustily for chastisement at the hands of authority. For myself, I am serenely sure that the world can still be relied upon to rub down any obtuse angles in the unruly and that therefore we need not bother much with those who must run after any new thing. But to say, as he does, that I never give any reasons for my vague-opinionated criticisms is inaccurate. My reasons, in Mr. Hendry's case, were the lines which I quoted from his book, reasons which have provided me with more unexpected supporters than has been his good fortune.

Finally, his suggestion that I am neither honest nor competent may not be meant too literally—verbiage does so sweep one away. But for a new "high" is nonsense, I commend him for his objection to criticism being opinionated. To be worth anything it must be clear-cut, but he would have it a mere tentative blather of half conclusions. It is a foregone conclusion that criticism will sometimes be wrong. But this is no great matter and certainly no reason for this consumption of paper in a period of shortage.

IRENE M. HEATON (Brighton) writes "Resurgam" on reading poem on page 89:

He that knew Love
As Life's golden thread
Coursing through all things—
He is not dead.

One with the Life-source
Alive in my heart-core
He spans thought and space-time
And knows grief no more.

How shall my wonder
Contain in its gladness
The thought of our one-ness
Destroying all sadness ?

Sing, sing my spirit
Transcending all sorrow
For my love comes in dreams
Saying, "There *is* to-morrow."

AN ANSWER FROM RAYMUND BOURNE TO W. R. LATHAM'S "QUESTION," p. 89 :

Not in foolishness or scholarly pride,
But humbly as befits this solemn theme,
I proclaim faith in mysteries which seem
Foolish to many who have cast aside
Truths long admitted which are now denied
By modern learning, with no faintest gleam
To lead them onwards to a surer beam,
Finding negation only as their guide.
The Cause of all, involves infinitude,
Else is not primal, this only exists
In that Perfection which alone is good,
Eternal source of all beatitude,
Therefore my steadfast hope on faith subsists,
Knowing that Good shall reign where evil stood.

CHRISTMAS HUMPHREYS SUPPLIES ANOTHER ANSWER TO "QUESTION" :

Your faith is gone ?
Then let it go.
For we believe the things we do not know.
When wisdom flowers,
Wisdom, the knowledge of the heart,
Doubt may depart.
Serene assurance rings and sings
When self,
The braggart god-head of content,
Is dumb and impotent,
And all the tattered banners of our pride
Are fallen low,
And creeds and old allegiances have died.
Then fear, and all confusion's panoply
Will fall, a burden shed
And comfortable lies, and hope
And old despair be dumbly dead.
Only the trackless night will bear
The secret burden of the day,
From self to peace
From self-desiring to the heart's release,
An old and endless Way.

Others have trodden it and found it far.
They died to live
And living found the end,
And turned, the singing gates ajar,
To come again to men
For their enlightenment
As guide
And, if the heart be willing, friend.

Man walks upon two feet, the way
A Middle Way between.
Wisdom his goad importunate
His lamp within.
Then let it shine, for lonely is the road,
And slay confusion and the dark of hate.
For now is thy beginning; now
And at the end, thine immanence.

Walk on. To all thy questioning
The silence echoes
Slow, serene and clear.
Walk on, and have no fear.
The builder of the house of self will cling
To follies of an older fashioning;
The Way leads hence.
To find deliverance, the Buddha said
Work out your own salvation,
And with diligence.

£50 FOR A LONG POEM

As a gesture of gratitude for the kindness he has received during his residence in this country, the Brazilian poet and novelist, Senhor Paschoal Carlos Magno, wishes to offer a prize of £50 for the best long poem written by an English poet since October last. At his request, the competition will be held under the aegis of The P.E.N.

The prize, which will be known as "The Brazil Prize," will be awarded for the poem, not hitherto published, which the adjudicators regard as the best submitted. The work must be not less than two hundred lines in length and may be in any form, *e.g.*, epic, narrative, contemplative, a sequence of poems, regular or irregular, rhymed or unrhymed—so long as it may be properly described as a single poem.

There is no age limit. Manuscripts must be delivered not later than 31st October, 1944; poets overseas will be allowed two months' latitude. All rights in poems submitted will be retained by the poets. Messrs. Richard Church, C. Day Lewis and Herbert Read have kindly agreed to act as judges and their decision will be final. I shall be pleased to send further particulars of the competition to anybody interested.

The Porch, Tring, Herts. HERMON OULD.

I first discovered THE POETRY REVIEW when I met one of your readers in the Western Desert some three years ago, and since that time have found stray copies in the Middle East every now and then. (Last year I bought a second-hand copy of the February, 1940, issue, for three shillings!) Now that I have returned to England I should like to become a regular reader of THE POETRY REVIEW myself: S. J. DAWSON, R.A.

DYNAMICS OF AMERICAN POETRY: CII

Stanton A. Coblentz, owner and editor of the poetry magazine *Wings*, also author of some twelve books on poetry, is well known to our readers as a valued contributor and I have always reviewed his books and am now looking at his latest, which is entitled *Green Vistas*, a book of ninety-five pages containing sonnets and lyrics. The following poem, "Air Raid," has attracted my attention and will give some further idea of this poet's talent.

I watched the bombs drop over London town
In the black evening and the smoky dawn,
And while huge docks and towers rumbled down,
It seemed a curtain suddenly was withdrawn.
It seemed that where the fliers leapt and swooped,
A figure, mountain-tall, with furrowed brow
And patriarch eyes, murmured with lips that dropped,
"And are the fruits of ages forfeit now ?"

Then what I saw was not a city charred
And nameless victims, line on sheeted line,
But Shakespeare, his grave features powder-scarred,
And Newton crushed beneath a fallen shrine ;
Hume a burnt airman ; Reynolds, Dickens, Keats,
Targets bomb-harried by the death-bound fleets !

We sustained a great loss in the death of William Alexander Percy in January, 1942. His *Collected Poems* (Knopf) is a book to own, to turn to in any mood. Although Mr. Percy has been a lawyer, soldier, cosmopolitan plantation owner and patriot, he has written his name indelibly in the book of poetry. The first poem of this collection is "Song" :

O singing heart, think not of aught save song ;
Beauty can do no wrong.
Let but th' inviolable music shake
Golden on golden flake,
Down to the human throng,
And one, one surely, will look up and hear and wake.
Weigh not the rapture ; measure not nor sift
God's dark, delirious gift ;
But deaf to immortality or gain,
Give as the shining rain,
Thy music pure and swift,
And here or there, sometime, somewhere, 'twill reach the grain.

In Mary Sinton Leitch we meet an accomplished poet with a number of poetry volumes to her credit as well as prose. She comes by her literary gifts naturally, being the daughter of Charlton T. Lewis, an editor of the *New York Evening Post*. The author tells us all the poems in *From Invisible Mountains* are new creations and we turn to the book with much interest to find what to-day and now this poet desires to write. The preface poem, "The Poet," is so musical we give it :

In the darkness he sings of the dawning,
In the desert he sings of a rose,
Or of limpid and laughing water
That through green meadows flows.

He flings a Romany ballad
Out through his prison bars

And, deaf, he sings of nightingales
Or, blind, he sings of stars.

And hopeless and old and forsaken,
At last with failing breath
A song of faith and youth and love
He sings at the gates of death.

A lover of music, Mrs. Leitch has given us her interpretation of Beethoven's Funeral March :

Can this be death that 'cello, flute and horn
Are celebrating in miraculous sound ?
Their theme is not defeat that sullen ground
Seals as its own : these measures do not mourn.
In them is triumph, exaltation, scorn
Of little fears and sorrows that confound
The shaken heart, till death itself is crowned
With laurel such as heroes' brows have worn.

With glorious cadence earth and air are loud.
The dirge breaks on the stars ; it fills the abyss
Of night ; it sweeps down avenues of cloud.
Now, loosed at last from doubt, I know that this
Music is truth, imperious and proud,
And death is only apotheosis.

This poet has been fortunate enough to sail the seven seas—in sailing ships and tramp steamers, which gives the breadth of vision with which she writes. Many distinguished writers have spoken in praise of Mary Sinton Leitch.

The poems in *The Upward Quest* by Gardner L. Green (Bruce Humphries, Boston) are high-minded and many are admirable. Mr. Green writes us from the Berry School, Mt. Berry, Georgia : he wants "through poetry to keep man facing forward and upward toward that new world which we are entering." To encourage this he has written "The Upward Climb" :

Up from the dim and distant past,
Out of the dust of measureless time,
The race has struggled, until at last
Man stands exalted and sublime.

The dark and dingy caveman's cell
Has grown in grace and size, until
Behold a place where gods may dwell,
A miracle of strength and skill.

The unknown world of far-off years,
Man now explores from pole to pole,
Released from superstitious fears
Because he sees it as a whole.

He flies around it through the air,
He sends his voice around through space,
So all each other's gifts may share
And make as one the human race.

There are no sure and final bars
To man's ascent in future time ;
Nothing to keep him from the stars ;
Nothing to limit his upward climb.

ALICE HUNT BARTLETT.

THE PREMIUM EDITOR'S REPORT

THE task of sitting in judgment upon this latest entry for our Premium Competition was, if anything, more arduous than usual, being more rarely lit by those flashes of true poetry which it is my duty and delight to uncover from among the mass of those other entries which are in one sense so discouraging but, in another, such evidence of an indomitable spirit that I reject them with difficulty and regret. I should be loath to allow the conviction to form in my mind that so many of our members and subscribers are foredoomed never to achieve a "mention" in this despatch. Indeed, I do not think so because of that tireless spirit which animates them. But I wish they would hearken more to the friendly voice which lifts itself up in this report and try to catch something of value (if there be any) to guide and help them along the road they pursue so valiantly.

There was, alas, little improvement discernible in those elementary matters upon which I have discoursed more than once—rhythm and metrical fidelity. Odd feet are still common, but seem to create no feeling of deformity in any one but myself. Those self-indulging poets who stress words of more than one syllable wrongly to make them fit are also still with us and unreformed, as are those whose rhymes take Pegasus by the bridle to lead him gently nowhere. To the former I would say, once again, do not take this sort of liberty, but work harder and pass no line until it reads aloud smoothly in plain English without acrobatic pronunciation. To the latter I would also suggest more effort, but of another kind. If your new line is undistinguished, contributing nothing but itself, like another row of knitting, scrap it without ruth, even although it scans and rhymes perfectly. Then there is that master of words whose virtuosity stops short of intelligibility, but who is, I think, unaware of this. The ability to read your work with the eye and the mind of the other fellow is, of course, the beginning and end of self-criticism, without which a poet is lost. I never come across an obscure passage in an otherwise good poem without a feeling of exasperated disappointment that some beauty is hid in that mist which the breath of self-criticism blows so easily away.

I was struck too, and afresh, by the number of nicely finished poems which were content to inform me how much the author really loves the spring, because of those daffodils and primroses which are the customary phenomena of that season. The emotion to which they are moved works upon them as simply as acid upon litmus-paper. Gently and without fuss, or any sudden outcry of inspiration, they turn sentimentally pink, but leave me most uncompromisingly blue. No one is ever interested, of course, in mere affirmations, even if rhymed and scanned, that someone else loves spring. We all do and for much the same reasons. But we might be interested in another person's deeper thoughts and mental-emotional reactions to that delectable time. These tenderly loving superficialities suggest to me a need to break down some inhibitions (since the subject is spring) and to open a way deeper into the heart and the mind, there to discover some richer cause for that renewed laughter in the blood than even the gold of the daffodil.

The award upon this occasion goes to JEAN KENWARD, of Chalfont St. Giles, whose three entries all achieved a sure consistency of merit. She sang to me with

a conviction and a lyrical excellence which removed my last hesitation in preferring her poems before those of any other competitor. The runners-up are :

HIGHLY COMMENDED

James Crawford Milne, Arbroath ; G. S. Oddy, Ryde ;
W. H. Dennett-Morgan, Redhill ; Stephanie Gasston, Brighton ;

COMMENDED

T. Astore, Romford ; F. Pritchard, Bournemouth ;
Lily F. Barry, Montreal ; Harry Sefton, Lytham ;
Rev. C. W. Cockerell, Truro ; Sarah Stafford, W.11 ;
A. E. Farmer, S.W.17 ; M. G. Tapley, Rochester ;
Sheila H. Harrison, Surbiton ; George Tayler, E.4 ;
Christine L. Henderson, Montreal ; Ruth Wolfers, Hollywood.
Mrs. D. N. Paine (Mary More), Hampstead ;

The usual premium offer for the best poem or poems submitted to the Premium Editor during the month (without limitation of subject) is continued. Not more than four lyrics or one long poem should be submitted. MSS. should reach "The Premium Editor, THE POETRY REVIEW, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1," by August 1st, accompanied by stamped addressed envelope, and if criticism is desired 5s. should be sent. It is essential that entrants to this competition be members of The Poetry Society or registered subscribers to THE POETRY REVIEW, and that each poem bears the name and address of the author. (Entries received after the formal closing date are carried forward to the next adjudication.)

SYDNEY DOBELL, NATURE POET

"SURELY it is strange that Cheltenham, where he nobly lived, not only as a poet, but also as a gracious, generous, beloved personality, carrying, it has been said, 'into letters the chivalry that is the glory of arms', should have so completely forgotten so rare a son." So said Lady Margaret Sackville of Sydney Dobell, when lecturing on him and his poetry at the Cheltenham Art Gallery. Lady Margaret added, "this insensitiveness in local memory is a modern characteristic. America's younger ears have rediscovered him, finding his adventures in poetry congenial to their young vitality."

Sydney Dobell, said the speaker, was born at Cranbrook, Kent, in 1824, he married in 1844, moved to Edinburgh from Cheltenham in 1854 and died at Barton End House, Gloucestershire, in 1874. He fell between two periods and the poems which made him famous were now, for the most part, unreadable. Those which so strangely anticipated the latest developments in verse were criticised as spasmodic and accepted, if at all, with caution. They could compare Dobell to some rare shrub—a "sport" among the ordered company of recognised trees, self-planted in a secret glade, for some such solitary and unique position did he occupy in the forest of poetry. "Haunted and haunting," words cheapened and discoloured by over-use, most fittingly conveyed the atmosphere of Dobell's verse, for haunted it was, tragically at times, but often, in his nature poems, by a sort of ecstasy, the very antithesis of grief. His music echoed and re-echoed through the closed places of the mind, becoming part of its intimate texture. It struck new notes, created a new mood, and to achieve that, even in a minor degree, was surely one of the sublime functions and tests of poetry.

Dobell was in a very special sense a nature poet ; a mouthpiece of the months in all their moods, varying between sublimities of storm and calm. What other poet

had so literally set the wind to words, so attenuating the thick substance of speech, that effortless as the wind it came whistling through keyholes? Not one among the other-worldly poets, not Coleridge, or Poe, or Walter de la Mare, gave so exact an impression of elemental voices rendered articulate in human speech. His genius came in flashes, in lines, words, phrases, incalculable as summer lightning.

Dobell lived for many years in Edinburgh and wrote—a remarkable feat for an Englishman—poems which were in excellent Scots. Dobell's originality, his early morning innocent outlook as of one visiting the world for the first time, made him an innovator in the truest sense, yet he remained throughout his life incurably sane. He surely deserved more than momentary fame. In a race, paradoxically, run backwards, it had taken almost a hundred years for their slower feet to overtake a singer, whom they, his successors, should have normally outrun.

Miss Eva Dobell, a niece of Sydney, who has contributed articles and poems to The Poetry Review, including an appreciation of her uncle's country poems and his family associations, supplies the following footnote:

It is a great pleasure to the relations of Sydney Dobell that his poems should be so understandingly appreciated by one of the sweetest poets of the present day, Lady Margaret Sackville. Though born in Kent, Sydney lived the greater part of his life in Gloucestershire, from ten years old to his marriage at the age of twenty at Charlton Kings, then a country village near Cheltenham, and, after his marriage, at various places in the neighbourhood. He spent some years in Scotland, and later every winter was passed abroad, in Spain or Italy, a land he greatly loved and where he made many friends among the Italians, who remembered with gratitude his first published poem, *The Roman,* which enthusiastically espoused the cause of Garibaldi and had a good deal of influence at the time. But his abiding love was for his native Cotswolds, and his letters are full of descriptions of their beauty or nostalgic allusions to familiar spots, and the nature-pictures in his poems are almost all drawn from the Gloucestershire countryside. His country poems, with their delicate fidelity to nature, are perhaps the part of his work that should make the most lasting appeal. But a curiously modern note is sounded in the war sonnets. He had much at heart the ideal of friendship between England and America, as expressed in the sonnet:

> Nor force nor fraud should sunder us,
> Oh ye . . . . . who in eternal youth
> Speak with a living and creative flood
> This universal English.

And there seems something almost prophetic in the lines to "A Statesman":

> He helms thee, England! who
> Faced by the very Spirit of the Storm,
> Full at the phantom drives his dauntless prow!
> And though the Vision rend in racks of blood,
> And drip in thunder from his reeling spars,
> The compass in his hand, beholds the flood
> Beneath, o'er-head the everlasting stars
> Dim through the gory ghost; and calm in these,
> Through that tremendous dream sails on to happier seas.

We regret that in a last minute notice of *Introducing Modern Poetry* in our last issue two errors went uncorrected. The compiler's name should have been W. G. Bebbington and the price 6s. Happily these slips were put right by the publishers' advertisement on another page.